

# Possible Results and Counseling Issues



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# Overview



- **Choosing how to give a couple their results, can be a very difficult process and counsellors should approach it as such.**
- **When choosing how to deliver results to couples, counsellors need to be aware of the many issues concerning couples counselling.**

# Factors to Consider



- Partners chose to come together to learn their HIV status as a couple.
- Couple may be either concordant or discordant
- Each partner individually is either HIV-positive or HIV-negative.
- The better able the partners are to handle HIV in their shared lives as a couple, rather than as individuals, the more likely they will be able to cope.

# Factors to Consider, cont



- The counsellor should support the couple to address HIV in terms of “we” and “our”, rather than “I”, “his”, or “her”.
- The counsellor should provide a summary of the results to the couple.
- If discordant, the counsellor starts by saying the results are different.
- The counsellor should provide results for the HIV-positive partner first.

# Concordant Negative Counseling Message



- “Both of you have tested HIV negative.”
- Let the couple know that while this is good news, they are not immunized or protected from infection for life.
- Discuss with the couple issues regarding the window period for infection if a recent unprotected sexual encounter occurred.
- Discuss how to avoid other high-risk contact and activity in the future.
- Make sure the couple understands the results they have been given and what prevention methods they should take in the future.

# Concordant Positive Counseling Message



- “Both of you have tested HIV positive.”
- Let the couple know that they are infected with HIV and that they may or may not become sick.
- Explain to couple that certain individuals have been infected for more than 10 years without developing symptoms.
- Discuss that all individuals with positive test results are contagious and need to protect their sexual partners.
- Explain to couples that condom usage is critical for use with other partners who may be HIV negative

# Concordant Positive Counseling Message



- Let the couple know that at this time there is no way to distinguish between who will become sick and who will not.
- Ensure couple understands that HIV positive individuals need to have a healthy diet, avoid other infections and obtain healthcare quickly when they become ill.
- Make clear to the couple that they should devise a strategy to prevent unplanned pregnancies in the future.
- Advise couple to consider the implications of pregnancy and get information about contraceptives. Explain that there are methods of prevention of unplanned pregnancy that are more efficient than condoms.

# Discordant Counseling Message



- Counselors need to be very sensitive to the complexity of this situation.
- Counsellor will need to speak to couple as a unit and to each partner regarding their status.
- The following are talking points that should be adhered to during these sessions.

## Relevant to the Positive Partner's Health



- Make sure the couple knows that one partner is infected with HIV however, that partner may or may not become ill. Certain individuals go 10 or more years without developing symptoms.
- The positive partner needs to understand he/she must keep to a healthy diet, avoid other infections, and obtain healthcare quickly when they become ill.
- Encourage the couple to think of way to support the positive partner and the children.

# Relevant to Preventing Transmission



- Make certain that the couple understands that this result does not mean that the negative partner is immunized or protected against HIV infection or exposure
- Discuss with the couple the issues concerning the HIV window period for discordant couples.
- Discuss the importance of avoiding transmission to negative partner and children.
- Discuss how to avoid other high risk contacts and activities in the future.
- Conduct condom skills practice with the couples by using a condom demonstration tool.

# Preventing Unplanned Pregnancies



- Devise strategies to prevent unplanned pregnancies in the future; discuss with the couple birth control options as well as how to protect the negative partner.
- Advise couple to consider the implications of pregnancy and get information about modern contraceptives
- Explain to the couple that there are many methods of prevention of unplanned pregnancy that are more efficient than condoms.