Physician Script on Routine HIV Screening

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (the College) recommends routine human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) screening as a standard part of gynecologic and obstetric care for women aged 19–64 years and targeted screening for women with risk factors outside of that age range, for example, sexually active individuals younger than age 19 years. Health care providers should annually review patients’ risk factors for HIV, assess the need for retesting, and offer a repeat HIV test at least annually to women with risk factors. Ideally, opt-out HIV screening should be used (ie, the patient is notified that HIV testing will be performed as a routine part of gynecologic and obstetric care unless she declines testing). The College offers a Patient Education Pamphlet, HIV and Women; however, this information alone may not meet specific informed consent requirements in your state, if any such requirements exist. When notifying women about routine HIV screening in gynecologic care in states allowing opt-out screening, health care providers may find it helpful to preface the conversation with the following suggested script:

“I test all my patients who are between 19 years old and 64 years old for HIV as a routine part of their care. (For adolescents add: “and also test younger patients who are having sex or have been sexually active.”) More than one million people in the United States have HIV and about one fifth of these people don’t know they have it. Because they don’t know, they can’t get treatment that may help them live longer. This pamphlet (HIV and Women) tells you about HIV and why you should be tested. When you have finished reading this information, I would be glad to answer any questions you have. You will be tested for HIV today unless you tell me not to.”

If a patient declines HIV testing, it should be documented in the medical record and should not affect access to care. Obstetrician–gynecologists should be aware of and comply with legal requirements regarding HIV testing in their jurisdiction(s). Legal requirements for HIV testing may be verified by contacting local or state public health departments (also see Resources).

Resources

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
409 12th Street, SW
PO Box 96920
Washington, DC 20090-6920
800-673-8444 or 202-638-5577
www.acog.org
www.womenandhiv.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
1600 Clifton Road, NE
Atlanta, GA 30333
www.cdc.gov/hiv
Downloadable resources for patients are available at
www.cdc.gov/hiv/resources/brochures/index.htm

The National HIV/AIDS Clinicians’ Consultation Center at the University
of California–San Francisco—maintains an online compendium of state
HIV testing laws that can be a useful resource (www.nccc.ucsf.edu)

  National HIV/AIDS Clinicians’ Consultation Center
  UCSF Department of Family and Community Medicine at
  San Francisco General Hospital
  1001 Potrero Avenue, Building 20, Ward 22
  San Francisco, CA 94110
  415-206-8700

  Mailing Address
  University of California–San Francisco
  Box 1365
  San Francisco, CA 94143-1365

  Warmline (National HIV Telephone Consultation Service)
  1-800-933-3413 (Monday–Friday, 8 AM–8 PM [Eastern Time])
  www.nccc.ucsf.edu

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