



COACH Team Newsletter

Counselling to Optimize Adherence, Choice, and Honest Reporting

January 2018

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!

Counseling Participants who Seroconvert during HOPE

One of the most stressful experiences for a counselor is to work with someone who has recently learned of her infection with HIV. A number of study sites have faced this issue with HOPE participants and many have asked for some guidance in this process. You all have extensive experience with this so what I hope to offer are some things to keep in mind:

Prior to meeting with the participant, meet with your site team to try to discuss the context of the seroconversion. For example, check the residual drug levels to assess if she was using the ring consistently; look at the timeline to seroconversion to see if the participant could have been in the window period when she was tested at the Enrollment Visit.

Options counseling has not been designed for the person who seroconverts. You should not try to use it in this context because it will not address the needs of the participant at this crucial time.

Use your client-centered counseling skills.

- Empathize!! Listen to your participant, try to understand her experience through her eyes
- Ask her what she needs at that moment, let her lead you. You may want to reassure her by providing a lot of information but she might need something else at that moment.
- Ask her what questions she has right now
- Remind her that it is okay to take a little time to think things through before making decisions.

Provide her with neutral information. Sometimes we share information to try to convince someone to do something. Hold back on that!! Share information neutrally so that the person can make her own decisions. If necessary, explain how someone with high residual drug levels can still seroconvert. We know that when used very consistently the ring greatly reduces the risk of infection but it is not perfect, that is why during counseling sessions we have always encouraged participants to select another method of prevention.

Offer support. Offer the participant another appointment so that you can continue to discuss the questions she has and explore next steps for her.