Public Health – Cultural Humility

**Definitions**

**Cultural Humility:** A way to frame interactions between medical professionals and patients. It was developed as an alternative to cultural competency and incorporates commitment to learning and reflection as opposed to mastery of a culture that is not one's own. Cultural humility encourages self-critique, addressing power imbalances, and maintaining partnerships.

**Medication Abortion:** This method of early abortion is currently used up to 63 days of pregnancy in the U.S. The most commonly used regimen includes mifepristone (formerly known as RU486) followed by misoprostol. Generally a woman has an appointment with a provider where she obtains mifepristone and misoprostol. After taking mifepristone in her provider’s office, she self-administers misoprostol one to three days later at home. Within a few hours, she has miscarriage with cramping and bleeding that ends the pregnancy.

**MMR and Varicella Vaccines:** The MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps, and rubella. The varicella vaccine protects against chicken pox. Both vaccines are live attenuated vaccines meaning that they are made from actual viruses that have had their virulence reduced. While they are very safe, there is a risk that the virus can re-virulize through secondary mutation or cause complications for those who are immunocompromised.

**Options to Pregnancy:** A pregnant woman has three options to consider for her pregnancy, which are parenting, adoption, and abortion. If she chooses adoption, she has a choice of open adoption (i.e. having a relationship with the adoptive parents) or closed adoption (i.e. not having a relationship with the adoptive parents) and many options in between. If she chooses abortion she may choose a medication abortion or surgical abortion depending on how many weeks pregnant she is and what the relevant laws are in her state.

**Risk:** The probability of an adverse event happening (or loss of something valuable) combined with the severity of the adverse event. Risks may be perceived as more or less risky than they really are.

**Special Needs:** An umbrella term for children who need assistance due to medical, mental, or psychological disabilities.
Orienting Facts

- Urine pregnancy tests do not detect pregnancy at the time of conception. Most home pregnancy tests will detect pregnancy at the time that the missed period is due or two weeks after ovulation.

- CDC regulations stipulate that individuals who seek to immigrate to the United States, may be subject to a health examination and will be assessed for vaccination status.¹

- Vaccinations are 1 of the top 10 public health achievements of the 20th century.²

- “Risk to a developing fetus from vaccination of the mother during pregnancy is theoretical. No evidence exists of risk to the fetus from vaccinating pregnant women with inactivated virus or bacterial vaccines or toxoids. Live vaccines administered to a pregnant woman pose a theoretical risk to the fetus; therefore, live, attenuated virus and live bacterial vaccines generally are contraindicated during pregnancy.”³


Clinical Scenario – Ah Lam

Ah Lam is a 29-year-old woman who recently emigrated from China. She and her husband present in the emergency room of a small community hospital and she is complaining of breast pain. Since the couple only recently moved to town, do not have a primary care provider and are unfamiliar with the U.S. health care system. They drove to the nearest hospital for care, which is the only medical facility within a 35-mile radius. Ah Lam speaks limited English and tells you that she does not want an interpreter because her husband can translate.

As part of the intake history, the nurse asks Ah Lam about her last menstrual period. Ah Lam is not sure thus the nurse conducts a urine pregnancy test. The pregnancy test is positive. While they were not trying to conceive, Ah Lam and her husband are excited. In discussing prenatal care with them, the nurse learns that they both received vaccines to be eligible for entry into the United States within one month of when she would have conceived. The nurse knows that MMR and Varicella vaccines are contraindicated during pregnancy because it is a live virus, so the nurse counsels the couple on the theoretical risks to the pregnancy.

In spite of the information the nurse provides to Ah Lam and her husband, the couple are worried about possible risks to the pregnancy, even if theoretical. They indicate that they want to consider an abortion. Additionally, they tell the nurse that if they chose to terminate, their preference would be to do it at home with herbs that a friend can send them from China.
PREGNANCY TEST HISTORY

Name: ______ Ah Lam ______ Age: ______ 29 ______

I identify as: ☒ Female ☐ Male ☐ Transgender ☐ Specify: _____________

Gender pronoun: ☒ She ☐ He ☐ Specify: _____________

Would you like a companion in the room with you for your visit? ☒ Yes ☐ No
If so, whom? ________________ husband

With whom can you talk with for support?
☒ Partner(s) ☐ Parent(s) ☐ Family Member(s) ☐ Friend(s) ☐ No One

Pregnancy History:

Pregnancies ______ 0 ______
Births ______ 0 ______
Miscarriages ______ 0 ______
Abortions ______ 0 ______

Have you already taken a pregnancy test? ☐ Yes ☒ No
What were the results ________________

When was the first day of your last menstrual period? ______ I don't know ______

Are you using any form of birth control? ☐ Yes ☒ No
If so, what are you using? ________________

If you are pregnant, which options would you like to discuss?
☐ Adoption ☒ Abortion ☒ Parenting

Case: Ah Lam is a 29-year old woman who recently emigrated from China with her husband. She came into the ER complaining of breast pain and a urine pregnancy test was done. Results of the pregnancy test were positive. Ah Lam and her husband received vaccinations to become eligible for entry into the United States within 1 month of conception.

Common Concern: Afraid of having a child with special needs.

Personality: Loves art. Wants to learn English.