Year 3 Medical Student 2

Health Sciences Faculty

University of Cape Town

Women’s Health in Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department

**THE HUMAN RIGHTS KEY**

**SUMMARY OF THE CLINICAL ENCOUNTER**

I interviewed a 14 year old female, Maria Williams from Hanover Park who was 9 months pregnant on the 22nd of July in GSH. The patient was about to deliver in a few days time.

1. **Local community**

The patient had difficulties accessing health care as she sadly explained to me that most people would stare and talk about her in public and also health care professionals in health facilities. This affected Maria emotionally and she felt that she did not receive good quality of care that she deserved.

1. **Education**

The information valuable to this woman was to talk to her about sex and its risks, e.g. STIs and HIV, contraceptive method and also addressing any psychological issues that she had. Stigma of teenage pregnancy was one of the topics we discussed and the adverse effects that come from it. The patient had been seeing a social worker so on the psychological aspect she was getting better.

1. **Obstacles**

This young woman faced a lot of obstacles throughout her pregnancy. Firstly she was suspended from her school and so she could not continue with her education and because she did not know her rights she did not fight the decision the school made, this as she said brought a lot of stress in her life of which she was scared it would affect her and her unborn child. Also, as people got to know more about her pregnancy she found that she had fewer and fewer friends and thus had little support structure. Most Health care professionals were not treating her with respect and although she knew she did not know where to go or how to exercise her rights to make sure she gets equal health care. Also, a future challenge is the one of being a mother with little support system and these issues need to be addressed with her and a solution found.

1. **Relevant legal instrument**

The Convection on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) defines discrimination as: Any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field. Clearly from this definition Maria was discriminated against. This is not only happening to her only but to most patients in South Africa and makes me realize we still have a long way to go to try and change people’s mindset on certain issues such as teenage pregnancy and make them realize that these young women should be treated in the same way as any other woman and if that is not the case then that is discrimination which is punishable legally.

1. **My developing Professionalism**

On encounter of the patient, the knowing dimension came about when I had to speak to her about her and her unborn child and get to know what was going on in her life and how majorly the problem was affecting her and her unborn child. This made me realise that not all patients will come with a physical problem that just needs medical attention to be solved and sometimes if we do not dig a little further with our patients empathically, we may never discover the main problem that is bothering them. I had not been in a situation where I had to interview a patient like Maria and at first I was a bit uneasy as to what I needed to say and do for her, then I realised all she needed was someone to listen to her empathically and not judge her. I learnt to be empathic with her listening to all the obstacles she had encountered. Reflecting on the whole interview made me realize more about my emotions when it comes to teenage pregnancy how big of an issue this is in South Africa and how I could handle the situation better for my patients in future who come with the same problem and not be sympathetic about the issues they discuss with me but to be objective and be more empathic.