

How Was Your First Week in the AIDS Ward?

M: Hi, Susan. How's it going? How was your first week in the AIDS ward?

F: OK, I guess. But I never realized how many different things nurses have to do. There's a lot to learn ...

M: There sure is! That's why we're having this meeting today, Susan. As your advisor, it's my responsibility to help you learn your new job. We've found that sometimes our new nurses have trouble adjusting to the AIDS ward.

F: Actually, I do feel worried about being here.

M: That's normal. I felt the same way when I started. What are you nervous about?

F: I know it sounds dumb, but I keep thinking that I might get infected with HIV. I know there isn't a very big risk, but I'm still worried, My friends are worried, too.

M: What are your friends saying?

F: Well, some of them don't want to be around me now. I think they're afraid that they'll get HIV somehow. One friend always used to give me rides in her car, but she won't drive me to work now because she's afraid I'll get the virus in her car!

M: That's difficult situation. But it's good opportunity to teach your friends the facts about HIV and AIDS, so they'll know they're wrong, And if they don't want to learn anything, maybe they aren't good friends. I know I lost a few friends when I started working here.

F: My family's also worried. My mother keeps saying, "You can't be too careful!" She's afraid that I'll get AIDS from a patient. So I try to be very careful. I always wear the protective clothing, you know, the rubber gloves, paper clothing, and plastic glasses. But then something strange happened.

M: What happened?

F: I went to see a patient, to bring him his lunch, and he looked at me and said. "Oh, you're new here, aren't you?" Then he was acting very angry at me after that, I think it was because of the clothing!

M: Why do you think he was angry?

F: I'm not sure. I was just trying to protect myself.

M: I think the important thing is to remember when you're working with AIDS patients is that you're working with people, people who are very sick, but who still need to be treated with respect. I remember what my boss told me when I first started working with AIDS patients. He said, "It's important to isolate the AIDS virus, but not the AIDS patients."

F: What do you mean by "not isolate the AIDS patients"?

M: Well, just imagine that you're very sick. You're lying in bed in the hospital, worrying that you are going to die. Then, every time some one comes in the room, they're covered from head to toe in protective clothing. How would that make you feel?

F: Terrible! It would make me feel like I was dangerous, like no one wanted to be near me.

M: Exactly. You would feel very isolated. We don't want our AIDS patients to feel that way. It's important that they feel just like all our other patients.

F: So what should I do?

M: Well, you have to think carefully before you go into someone's room. We know that it's impossible to get AIDS from just touching someone, or breathing the air near to them, or even sharing a glass of water. AIDS, as you know, is passed through blood or bodily fluids. So when you go into a patient's room, think to yourself: "What am I going to do in here? Will I be in contact with blood or other bodily fluids?" For example, when you serve lunch to someone, do you think you need to wear protective clothing? Is there going to be any blood then?

F: No, I guess not. I guess I don't need to wear the clothing when I serve food.

M: How about when you draw someone's blood? Do you need the protective clothing then?

F: Well, there's chance that I could prick my finger on the needle.

M: Right. In that case I'd wear gloves, just to be safe. I guess the rule to live by is to protect yourself when you need to, but don't wear the clothing unnecessarily. Part of our job is to take care of the patients' feelings, as well as their illness, and too much protective clothing can make them feel uncomfortable.

F: You have such a good attitude. Don't you ever get depressed? You know, working with sick people all the time who will never get better. I'm not sure I can handle it.

M: It is sad sometimes, but remember that many people in the AIDS ward do get better. They aren't cured of AIDS, but they can become healthy again and go back to their lives. Especially now, with so many new AIDS medicines, many people live for a long time. But unfortunately, many people do die as well. Sometimes, when you've been working with a patient for a long time, and

that person dies, it's almost like losing a good friend. But on the other hand, you'll meet some of the most wonderful people here. There are people who are sick and dying, but they are still trying to be happy and live as best they can.

F: I feel a little bit better now. It's good to talk to someone who has experience.

Questions:

1. What is Susan's job?
2. How does Susan's family feel about her job?
3. What should Susan do with AIDS patents, according to the man?
4. Through which of the following can AIDS be passed?
5. Which of the following statements is NOT true according to the conversation?

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