

Case Study: Medical Care

Enhancing the Response to Trans Survivors of Sexual Assault

Alex is a 19-year-old client who presents to the emergency department. Alex believes that he may have been sexually assaulted but is unsure. Alex describes how he went out with a few friends to a gay bar the previous evening and discloses to triage staff that he is a **trans man**.

After you meet him, Alex describes how he met up with a date at the bar and was **offered a drink**. The next thing he remembers is waking up in a hotel room, alone, with his pants undone. He appears distraught and confused and mentions that the only thing he remembers from that night is hearing the words, "you're not a real man." He indicates that since he has been on **testosterone for several years**, he is often perceived as a cis man, but has not had genital surgery. Alex believes his date may have assaulted him after becoming aware of his anatomy. He is concerned about where he is going to go after seeing you, as he mentions that he lacks stable housing.

Reflection Questions:

What might Alex be feeling?

There is no single correct answer for this question. However, you should consider the range of complex emotions that Alex might be experiencing as a result of his situation, including general distress, sadness, anger, fear, and worry, among others.

What might Alex's key concerns be at this time?

Alex may have numerous concerns at this time. However, some significant concerns you might consider are: Alex's concern that he was assaulted because he is trans, as well as the emotions that might accompany that possibility; Alex's worries about STI and HIV infection; and his concerns about pregnancy. You should also consider the impacts of unstable housing on these and other issues.

Is Alex at risk of being pregnant?

The correct answer is yes. Alex is at risk of becoming pregnant, as testosterone is not an effective means of contraception. Unless he is already aware that testosterone alone cannot prevent pregnancy, Alex should be educated on the risk of pregnancy in his situation.

If the nature of the assault suggests it, what emergency contraception can be offered to Alex?

The correct answer is any means of contraception that is not estrogen-based would be appropriate in the context of Alex's care. This includes the morning after pill and the copper IUD.

If Alex is at risk of having contracted an STI, what medications can he be offered?

The correct answer is any of the standard medications currently in use for treatment of STIs would be safe for Alex, as there are no known contraindications between medications used in STI treatment and hormone replacement therapy (HRT) for transitioning.

If Alex consents to have a genital examination, what considerations might be important for healthcare providers to account for, given that he is on testosterone therapy?

The correct answer is proceed cautiously with a genital examination as the client's vaginal canal may be particularly susceptible to tears.

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