



# **Medical Assistant Training Manual**

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# Topics

- ∞ Needs assessment of nursing and ancillary health staff at border region community health centers (CHCs) identified the topics requiring training
- ∞ **Learning Objectives were developed for each topic**
- ∞ Initially, training dates for staff scheduled at their site



# Topics requiring training

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- HIV: The virus and how it works
- **Course of HIV Infection**
- HIV Counseling and Testing, and Confidentiality
- **Family and Reproductive Health**
- Risk Assessment
- **Teaching HIV Prevention**
- Common Challenges for Healthcare Workers
- **Working with people different from “us”**

# Problems arise

- ⌚ Co-management model had strong buy-in from physicians yet ancillary staff and administrative leaders seemed less interested in training
- ⌚ **Training sessions were to be held in sequential order**
- ⌚ Often cancelled at last minute - sometimes after AETC trainers had traveled for hours to site

# Etiology of Problems

- ∞ CHCs have great turnover among ancillary staff--most are medical assistants NOT nurses
- ∞ **These health professionals have less education than nurses and physicians, are often paid low wages which leads to frequent staff turnover**
- ∞ Staff had multiple responsibilities in clinic, HIV was a lower priority

# After one year of trying to train....

- ⌚ Decided that staff turnover of medical assistants and the multiple roles served by the CHCs required a different approach
- ⌚ The self-paced manual would accommodate staff turnover and require buy-in by CHC administrators and supervisors

# The manual :

- ∞ Is written at an 8th grade reading level
- ∞ **Brings new medical assistants “up to speed” with HIV 101 information that is unlikely to change**
- ∞ Cites need for ongoing education and training as HIV medications are developed and prescribed often
- ∞ **Allows the trainee to be ready to attend an HIV update held by AETC**

# Examples from the manual

- **Course of HIV Infection**
- After completing this session, the learner will be able to:
  - Describe the course of HIV infection
  - Explain what HAART means
  - Discuss the importance of adherence to medication protocol

# Example of text

- Ω It can be a difficult job working with HIV patients. It can be sad because people get sick and die, and it can be frustrating because the patients may not seem to take care of themselves. Remember that all patients are people and they deserve respect for being human. Also, remember that it is never acceptable to blame someone for having this disease. Many diseases are acquired through lifestyle. Lung cancer is most common in smokers, diabetes in people who eat lots of refined carbohydrates, back pain in people who do manual labor, and heart disease in people who are overweight and don't exercise a lot. These too are all lifestyle diseases. Blaming the sick will not make them better, nor will it help you in dealing with patients.

# Test questions...

- ⌚ Are listed at the end of the manual
- ⌚ **Are directly related to the learning objectives**
- ⌚ Can be scored by self or supervisor
- ⌚ **Supervisors can set the score for percentage passed as they deem appropriate (out of 100%)**

# Use is encouraged!

- ∞ Translation to Spanish was completed by Ms. Sandra Garcia of Chiricahua Community Health Center (ABHAC member)
- ∞ Available for use by downloading from the following website:  
<http://www.fcm.arizona.edu/azaetc/Resources.html>
- ∞ Easy to individualize and modify for any community

# Lessons Learned

- ∞ Ancillary health professionals have very different training needs and are more difficult to access for training than licensed professionals (physicians, nurses, pharmacists, dentists)
- ∞ **These health professionals may need more basic education at lower reading level**
- ∞ Rural employees have multiple and competing demands in their work
- ∞ **Lower paid health staff have higher turnover rate which leads to need for accessible training**



# Lessons learned

- ∞ Collaborative projects offer great opportunity to reach into underserved populations
- ∞ **A wealth of talent exists in the rural border communities (eg: translator)**
- ∞ Trust that develops through collaborative work will carry over into trust in other projects, and trust in referral care