

Shannon and Jake: An Application of Medical Ethics Principles

by

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“Please don’t tell my parents, they’ll kill me! They told me not to see Jake anymore, but they don’t understand. Guys my age are total geeks, and Jake is the best. We have this amazing connection....”

Dr. Walsh listened patiently to Shannon. He was concerned for her and worried about what the future held for this 16-year-old. He had been Shannon’s physician since her parents moved to town, about eight years ago. His relationship with the family, including Shannon, had always been excellent, but he wondered how and if that would change, now that Shannon had tested positive for Chlamydia.

“When my parents found out that Jake was 18 and out of high school, they told me I couldn’t see him. They still think I’m a kid! So, I’ve been sneaking out to see him. He told me that he loves me, but doesn’t want to be with someone whose parents treat her like a baby. He says if we get engaged, that would keep my parents quiet....”

Dr. Walsh had examined Shannon two days ago. She was complaining of vaginal discharge and thought it was a yeast infection, but her examination was consistent with Chlamydia cervicitis. Dr. Walsh treated her with 1 g of azithromycin orally and 250 mg of ceftriaxone intramuscularly. He also tested her for HIV and syphilis and asked her to follow up today. The tests had come back, and Shannon was positive for Chlamydia, but thankfully negative for gonorrhea, HIV, and syphilis. Her pap smear was still pending.

“Shannon, I’m glad your symptoms are better now, but do you know how you got Chlamydia?”

“I’ve only ever been with Jake. He said that his old girlfriend was a real skank, and she probably gave it to him.”

“When you two are together, do you use condoms?”

“Jake doesn’t like them. He says that they make him less sensitive. I know we’re supposed to use them to protect against HIV and stuff, but it’s not like Jake’s gay or anything.”