

## Next Time While taking History don't Forget to Ask "What is your Husband Doing"

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Indian society has changed dramatically. The male gynaecologists are more popular than females! Recently two Indian movies have shown lesbian relationship openly.

Nowadays, it is not uncommon for women to come alone to the doctors, without their husbands, or at times even without any relatives. In fact, very often, we find single women presenting themselves for consultation. At other times they may come with one or more friends.

It happened that a female patient (a mother of three children) came to my clinic with another three of her close friends (who were her distant relatives) from an eastern suburb of Mumbai. The patient had brought a thick file of investigations and had been to a number of specialists.

I could see the diagnostic problems-

1. Her failing health with loss of weight and weakness,
2. Anaemia (for which no cause could be found),
3. Mild PUO and

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4. Diarrhoea off and on, for no obvious cause. Her ESR was markedly raised, and obviously she had some organic disease, though it was not detected in any of the X-rays, sonographies, CT scans etc. I was sure that with so many doctors examining her, and with so much of imaging information, no common diagnosis like TB or malignancy or connective tissue disorder could be missed, so I thought of continuing history taking.

The next question I asked her was "What is your husband doing" to which she replied that he had died 9 years back, when he was 47 years old. To me it looked like death at a young age, so I asked her the cause of the death to which she hesitatingly replied that he was a case of HIV. She had never thought of getting her HIV test done after his death. The other consultants also failed to ask for an HIV test, maybe because she was a widow of 9 years duration.

Needless to say that the diagnosis of AIDS was confirmed and she was hospitalized in a private hospital under a physician's care.

I learnt a lesson to ask positively about the husband in history taking.