



I am Laura

My name is Laura and I am 14. I grew up in Caracas, Venezuela and live with my mother. I am the oldest child in the family. We live in the faded orange government buildings, which have four floors and no elevators. Food and medicine are hard to get. Sometimes there is no water, gas or electricity.

My boyfriend is 15. He is my neighbour. Two of my classmates who have had babies also live in my building. Because I have sex, a school friend told me about an organization called the civil association of family planning (PLAFAM). She said I can get all kinds of information from the PLAFAM clinic about sex and things like condoms and implants.

I asked my mom to take me. She knew I was having sex with my boyfriend. She also had me when she was a teenager, so she understood. We went to the city center to a residential neighborhood called Acacias. The clinic looked like many homes in the neighborhood except for a blue PLAFAM logo on the wall.

Women and young people talked and laughed while waiting in a long line outside the clinic. A woman called Belmar recognized my mom and they started talking about the changes they have seen in our city and country.

She Belmar also knows our neighbor who lives with her eight children including one of her daughter's babies. I heard that our neighbour had a procedure so that she couldn't have any more children, but I think her daughter could easily get pregnant again.

Belmar then asked who was going to be seen by the doctor. My mom told her it was me because I was having sex with my boyfriend and I needed to protect myself from becoming pregnant. My mom had always told me that there were no options except to have a baby if you became pregnant. There were a lot of girls from school who had babies. I had a hard time imagining being pregnant at my age. Or having a baby.

I looked down at the ground. It wasn't that I was ashamed because my mom always talked to me about sex, and I felt comfortable talking to her about everything. But I had never seen that type of doctor before. And, my mom told me that they were going to insert something in my arm to make sure I didn't get pregnant, which sounded painful. But I wanted to be protected.

Belmar met my eyes. You could tell that she cared about people just by the way she looked at you. I told her I thought it was going to hurt. She took my hand and explained that there would be no pain, just a little pinch in my arm. I shut my eyes tight, predicting the pain. Belmar and my mom then started talking about gas prices.

Belmar went inside the clinic, and we went in not too long after. The clinic was full of women and girls just like me. Some of them played with their phones, but I jiggled my knee waiting and wanting it to be over. Then they called my name.

The doctor was nice. She explained everything that was happening while she was doing it and my mother held my hand. Belmar was right- it was like a little pinch! Afterwards, I got dressed and went into the doctor's office.

Belmar was there. The doctor and Belmar talked about the implant and how long it would protect me but that it was also smart to use condoms to prevent infections. Belmar also told me that I was old enough to attend sex education classes without my mom if I wanted to. It was all much easier than I thought.

Now we have COVID-19. My neighbour told me that Belmar had to wait 12 hours just to get gas. There is no public transportation. I can't meet my boyfriend. But I am grateful that when I do, I will be protected. I made the right decision for us. I made the right decision for me.

Prepared by:

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