

AIDS issue challenges Hispanics on several levels

Hispanics not only have to fight the spread of AIDS, but also must struggle with their own culture, which makes them feel ill at ease dealing with issues about sexuality, said a speaker at an AIDS awareness workshop yesterday at Cabrillo College.

"We (Hispanics) don't talk about sex, period, much less in graphic detail," said Gloria Nieto, a volunteer with the Speakers Bureau for the Santa Cruz County AIDS Project.

The noon workshop was one of

several being held at Cabrillo this week as part of AIDS Awareness Week. Yesterday's workshop opened with a short film about a Hispanic family that experiences a family-member's death from AIDS. The victims never said how he got the disease, making some family members suspect he might have been infected by a homosexual encounter.

The death tears the family apart, as the father violently rejects any possibility that his son might have been gay or a drug

user, nor does he want the family to talk about AIDS. In the end, the family starts to mend and deal with the death.

Jessica Delgado, a Cabrillo student whose cousin died of AIDS in 1984, identified with the family portrayed in the movie.

"That's family up there," she said, pointing to the television set. "That was my family."

After her cousin's death, "there was silence" in the family concerning AIDS, she said, and the silence was harmful.

"I know what silence does," she said.

After the film, about 10 people were involved in a roundtable discussion about AIDS and how it affects minorities. Nieto pointed out that Hispanics not only have to fight their own prejudices, but a health-care system in the United States that discriminates against them.

"We don't have access to medical care (at the same level as) white gay men," she said.

—Emilio Alvarado