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Track C - Capacity building for HIV prevention research

MOPE0479 - Anticipating, understanding and communicating research results: lessons learned from recent HIV prevention research trials

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Background: From December 2006 to February 2008, multiple HIV prevention research results were released. Results included findings of risk reduction in trials of male circumcision in HIV-negative men; findings of no effect in HSV-2 treatment, microbicide and diaphragm trials; and evidence of potential increased susceptibility in the STEP AIDS vaccine trial. In some cases results were released after the trial had run to its planned completion date. In other instances trials were stopped early due to DSMB recommendations based on interim data reviews indicating futility or a trend towards harm. Each set of results triggered a cascade of decisions, analyses, discussions, and new questions about these trials and the broader implications for the field.

Methods: We reviewed dissemination strategies for communicating trial results at trial-site, national and global levels; interviewed stakeholders involved in disseminating, interpreting and analyzing results-including community advocates, journalists, trial investigators and participants; and monitored the press coverage of results.

Results: The planning and implementation of these communications strategies in the context of a constantly-evolving situation hold important lessons for the HIV prevention research field. A systematic review of planning, communications processes, decision-making and outcomes around these trial closures has shown strengths and areas for improvement with a specific focus on opportunities for strengthening responses through collaborative efforts.

Conclusions: While each trial is designed independently, the release of research results has far-reaching implications for all prevention trials, including those that are ongoing and in development. The experiences in understanding and communicating results from multiple trials over the past 14 months highlight important lessons on how best to reach key audiences quickly with accurate information while reflecting communities' priorities. This analysis also highlights the importance of understanding the broader implications of each trial result.

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