



## **GC News #117: December 10, 2009**

*GC News is a forum for exchange on new HIV prevention options, especially for women.*

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Microbicides Research Literacy Training

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## **Research Update**

### **Microbicides Development Programme (MDP) to Announce MDP 301 PRO 2000 Results!**

On 14 December, the Microbicides Development Programme (MDP) will announce the results of MDP 301, a large-scale effectiveness trial of a candidate vaginal microbicide called PRO 2000. This announcement is keenly anticipated because Phase IIb trial data released last February suggested that PRO 2000 may have reduced the number of new HIV infections among those using it by 30%.

Although these data were [not conclusive](#), the trial results generated hope because it was the first substantive indication that a vaginal microbicide could potentially help prevent HIV. The MDP 301 study may show some protective effect from using PRO 2000 gel or it may not. But because MDP 301 is a Phase III trial and had three times more participants than the HPTN 035 study, it is expected to provide clear evidence of whether PRO 2000 reduces the risk of HIV infection in women and, if so, to what degree.

To help advocates gain as rapid and thorough a understanding of what the MDP 301 trial results mean, the Global Campaign will host an **Advocates' Tele-briefing on Tuesday 15 December 2009 at 9am DC/2 pm London/4pm Johannesburg**. Leading MDP investigators will review the main findings and

the call participants will have the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the potential implications of the study results and “next steps” in microbicide advocacy. A [similar call](#) to prepare advocates of the upcoming PRO 2000 trial results was held last September and attended by over 160 participants globally.

To register for the **15 December Advocates’ tele-conference**, please send an email with name and e-mail address to [call@global-campaign.org](mailto:call@global-campaign.org). Those registered will receive call-in instructions, preparatory materials and a call agenda in advance.

GCM has also developed an Advocates Brief that provides an in-depth look at the issues that will shape whether, when, where and how PRO 2000 might become publicly available if it is shown to be both safe and effective. This [Brief](#) is available on GCM’s website, as are detailed materials on the trial prepared by MDP. We will post new materials regularly as information becomes available and will distribute a copy of GCM’s press release on the trial results to all GC News readers on December 14.

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## ***GCM and Partners in Action***

### **GCM’S Africa Programme Leader Asks South African Leaders *What is Your Responsibility?* at World AIDS Day 2009 Commemoration**

To mark World AIDS Day, GCM’s Africa Programme Leader, Dr. Samu Dube, joined UNAIDS Director Michel Sidibé, South African President Jacob Zuma, Minister of Health Dr. Aaron Motsoaledi and other South African leaders in a high-level panel at the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) World AIDS Day Commemoration. The [theme](#) of this event, “I am responsible. We are responsible. South Africa is taking responsibility,” encourages everyone in South Africa to take personal and collective responsibility to halt the spread of HIV.

Representing the Women’s Sector of SANAC during an interactive panel session, Dr. Dube had the opportunity to ask UNAIDS Director Michel Sidibé and South African Deputy President Kgalema Motlanthe about their personal commitment to finding new prevention methods for women. She asked, “As fathers and uncles, what will you do to ensure that the younger generation of women will have access to more tools and opportunities to protect themselves from HIV?”

It was also at this event that President Jacob Zuma stated his [Inaugural HIV and AIDS Address to the Nation](#), in which he declared the government is “ready to play [its] role” in ending the epidemic. He spoke of South Africa’s goal of universal voluntary HIV testing, and made a personal commitment to take an HIV test, proclaiming that “Every South African should know his or her HIV status,” and personifying the theme of the South African celebrations—I Am Responsible.

Additionally, President Zuma announced some key policy changes in his address. These included:

- Starting ART for HIV infected people at a CD4 count of 350 from the 2010 financial year;



**Dr. Samu Dube of GCM asks the South African Deputy President and the Director of UNAIDS: *As fathers and uncles, what will you do to ensure that the younger generation of women will have access to more tools and opportunities to protect themselves from HIV?* at a high-level panel at the South African National AIDS Council (SANAC) World AIDS Day Commemoration, *I Am Responsible*.**

- Providing ART to all people co-infected with TB/HIV at a CD4-count of 350;
- Providing all HIV infected infants under 12 months with antiretroviral treatment (ART); and,
- Putting all HIV infected pregnant women with CD4 count below 350 on HAART.

After a dark period of AIDS denialism in South Africa, these new policies based on scientific evidence truly marks the dawn of a new era—a new era for which we are all responsible. Above all, having the leadership of South Africa convene in one room to discuss how to move the country forward in dealing with this epidemic is a breath of fresh air.

## Makerere University School of Public Health Adopts Microbicides Essentials Online Course

### Africa



**Members of the Makerere University/Johns Hopkins University Research Centre CAB going through the course modules**

We are delighted to report that Makerere University's School of Public Health recently agreed to offer GCM's [Microbicides Essentials e-course](#) as part of the School's Fellowship Program. Located in Uganda's capital city, Kampala, Makerere is the oldest major institution of higher learning in East and Central Africa and a well-respected source of medical and public health training. Dr. Rhoda Wanyenze, Head of the Public Health Fellowship Programme, noted that they adopted the course because "the School of Public Health feels that it is important for its students to be aware of the developments that are happening in the field of HIV/AIDS including new prevention methods being researched".

As a way of introducing the course to potential learners, GCM's East Africa Coordinator, Pauline Irungu, facilitated a one hour seminar at the School of Public Health in which she reviewed the course, structure, including its unique interactive features, and explained how users could access it online. The Seminar was attended by 45 participants drawn from the students, faculty members, researchers and civil society organisations in Kampala who showed interest in the course as well as microbicides. The participants were enthusiastic to learn more about microbicides, the research process and how they could access the course.

This [free on-line course](#) is designed to provide answers to difficult scientific and ethical questions HIV prevention advocates face every day. In addition to in-depth content on microbicides, the course covers the basics of HIV transmission, the process of clinical trials, issues of need, use and access for when microbicides become available, and an overview of new prevention technologies in development and the advocacy landscape.

## *GCM's Highlighted Activities of the Month*

### 2009 Annual Community Involvement Community of Practice (CoP) Meeting 3-5 December, Mombasa, Kenya

GCM convened the 2009 annual CoP meeting in Mombasa, Kenya this month in an effort to help support community practitioners in their work and facilitate the sharing of lessons learned and better practices across research networks and sites. Community staff working at HIV prevention research sites, community program managers, and others working on community involvement issues shared their experiences and dialogue on issues related to community engagement. GCM feels strongly that

coordinated efforts such as these, aimed at sharing lessons learned and better practices, are vital for the eventual success of HIV prevention research. The meeting was attended by 34 CoP members, representing the microbicide, vaccine, and PrEP fields.

**Microbicides Research Literacy Training**  
**9-10 December, Johannesburg, South Africa**

In response to overwhelming demand, GCM will host its first official Microbicides Research Literacy training for Southern African civil society advocates and clinical trial staff in Johannesburg, South Africa. This training will enable participants to better communicate complex research concepts to trial participants, communities, and other stakeholders. These communication skills are vital for ensuring that trials can move forward successfully, so that new prevention options can be found.

**Advocates' Teleconference to discuss results of MDP 301**  
**15 December, Global**

See article above for more details and how to register.