



GC News #121: August 2010

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

Conferences and Meetings

AIDS2010: GCM/PATH and partners had an important presence at the International AIDS Conference—AIDS 2010—in Vienna, Austria, held 18-23 July. GCM co-hosted booths in the Global Village and in the exhibit hall, co-sponsored live game shows in the Women's Networking Zone and the Youth Zone, showcased our work through five posters, and led a high profile satellite meeting.

Highlighting the biannual conference were the results of the CAPRISA 004 trial. This study of nearly 900 women in South Africa tested the vaginal use of the ARV drug tenofovir in gel form to prevent male-to-female sexual transmission of HIV. This was the first late-stage clinical trial of a microbicide candidate containing an ARV. Showing both safety and an effectiveness rate of 39% among all participants, and 50% among those who used the gel in 80% of sex acts, the trial results brought welcome news to the assembly of more than 19,000 people. Audience members at the 20 July presentation gave principal investigators Salim Karim Abdool and Quarraisha Abdool a standing ovation.

A busy 3:00 press conference, led by FHI and CONRAD, was followed by a 6:30 satellite meeting hosted by the Global Campaign for Microbicides and co-sponsored by CAPRISA, Treatment Action Campaign, and the International AIDS Society-Industry Liaison Forum. The two-hour meeting engaged stakeholders, including USAID, NIH, WHO, UNAIDS, and the Gates Foundation, on the implications of the results from the CAPRISA 004 trial. ([webcast available here](#))

MMCI led a meeting with researchers and advocates to share the results and discuss their implications. GCM hosted a telebriefing with advocates the day after the announcement that included 196 participants from 23 countries, nearly a quarter of whom were from Africa.

News about the trial was reported globally, and GCM was widely quoted in the US and international press. More information is available at www.global-campaign.org/CAPRISA004.htm

M2010: The biannual International Microbicides Conference was held this year from 22 to 25 May in Pittsburgh, PA, USA. Nearly 1,000 delegates from 47 countries participated, including investigators, clinicians, policymakers, community advocates, and experts in global health who work in all facets of HIV prevention.

GCM had a strong presence at the conference, with oral and poster presentations, session chairing, and panel participation. GCM and partners organized a pre-conference workshop and a satellite session on Standards of Prevention in HIV Prevention Trials (see below); co-hosted the Advocates' Corner and the MMCI Training and Resource Center; and conducted 9 oral presentations and poster sessions ([more](#)).

The MMCI launched the [Communications Handbook for Clinical Trials](#), a practical guide for those working on HIV-prevention trials in developing countries. This resource is already being used in trainings in Africa, and dissemination continues.

Several [news stories](#) emerged from the conference, including a study of pregnant women showing that



men may be more susceptible to HIV infection when their sexual partners are pregnant. New HIV-prevention compounds and formulations including novel ARVs and vaginal rings were also profiled. Finally, a warning on the use of [anal lubricants](#) raised concerns amongst reporters and delegates.

MSMW and Women's HIV vulnerability: GCM invited Dr. Lakshmi Goparaju, assistant professor and project director of the Washington Metropolitan Women's Interagency HIV Study at Georgetown University, to present "What makes a woman vulnerable to HIV?: The other half of the down-low story" on 24 June at the PATH offices in Washington, DC. The presentation is available at www.global-campaign.org/NorthAmericanEvents.htm

HIV Biomedical Prevention Update: GCM Steering Committee Chair Dazon Dixon Diallo facilitated a prevention workshop on 11 June in Washington DC, part of a NIH Office of Women's Health and UNAIDS event called "Bringing Gender Home: Implementing Gender Responsive Programming for US Women and Girls." She invited Yasmin Halima to present on national and international perspectives on HIV biomedical prevention research. ([slides](#))

More Conferences: GCM staffers made connections with health care professionals from around the world at three conferences in Washington, DC in June: InterAction, Women Deliver, and Global Health.

Regional Updates

Highlights from South Africa: On 28 and 29 June, GCM facilitated a two-day prevention research literacy training in Venda. Thirty staff members from Thoyandou Victim Empowerment Programme attended.

African Programme Leader Samu Dube was invited to present at the Southern African HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAfAIDS) regional capacity-development workshop on 30 June in Pretoria. Discussing user-controlled HIV-prevention technologies for sub-Saharan Africa, she helped train trainers to integrate information about prevention into gender equality programmes.

Dube represented GCM at an international consultation hosted by GNP+ on the implications of new prevention tools for people living with HIV, held in Amsterdam 5-6 July.





A journalist raises a question during the GCM media roundtable

Kenya Happenings: Country coordinator Pauline Irungu came back from maternity leave in April and immediately returned to a fast pace. She held a community dialogue in Mombasa on 3 June, followed by a site visit for members of civil society the following day. On 8-9 June, she and Peninah Murunga conducted a skills-building workshop in Nakuru for civil society members from the Rift Valley province. On 16-17 June, they conducted a Prevention Research Literacy Training workshop in Nairobi, which drew participants from Nairobi, Thika, Coast, and Nyanza provinces, areas where HIV-prevention research is taking place.

African Programme Leader Samu Dube joined Pauline in Nairobi on 24 June for a media roundtable with the Internews Network, the USAID-funded media NGO. This was an opportunity to raise awareness among journalists about new HIV-prevention products under development and to strengthen GCM's media relationships.

GCM conducted a site visit for journalists at the Partners in PrEP Thika clinical trial site on 30 June. The aim of this visit was to provide journalists with an opportunity to gain better understanding of how clinical trial sites operate, to interact with community members and site staff, and to establish rapport to improve reporting for HIV-prevention research in Kenya.



Isaac Sagala from Ghetto FM interviews Dr. Elizabeth Irungu, a clinician at the Partners in Prevention Thika clinical trial site

Staff Changes: In the past two months, four staff members announced their departures from GCM. Katie West, Gary Wolnitzek, Deborah Baron, and Noma Barnabas will be leaving the organization. Gary is starting graduate school at Towson University in Maryland, and Noma is going to the Peri-natal HIV Research Unit based at Baragwanath Hospital as its Community Advisory Board & Communications Coordinator. We wish them all the best as we build our team in Africa.

Highlighted Resources

Standards of Prevention: The [Standards of prevention in HIV prevention trials](#) report is now available online and was featured at the Microbicides 2010 conference and the AIDS2010 conferences.



The report, a follow-up to a consultation held in Kampala, Uganda, in March 2009, outlines key ethical and practical questions and recommendations on the design and implementation of clinical trials and their HIV-risk reduction approaches. Specifically, the report argues:

- That the ongoing debate around standards of prevention should be widened;
- That a concrete decision-making process for trials and communities will need to be developed, implemented, evaluated, and adapted; and
- For the required investment in the intellectual and political work to develop new frameworks for considering the needs and rights of individuals in trials within the overarching global need for new prevention technologies.

For the report's first public appearance, GCM, along with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), hosted a satellite symposium titled "Standards of Prevention in HIV Prevention Trials" at the 2010 International Microbicides Conference in May. A panel of experts discussed how to establish decision-making frameworks for concluding when an HIV-prevention method:

- is proven;
- is established; and
- should be added to the standard HIV-prevention package offered in biomedical trials.

Facilitated by GCM Director Yasmin Halima, satellite speakers included Roberta Black, National Institutes for Allergies and Infectious Diseases; Samu Dube, GCM; Catherine Hankins, UNAIDS; Elizabeth McGrory, consultant; Lynn Paxton, CDC; and Gita Ramjee, South Africa Medical Research Council.

Please download the publication from the GCM website at www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/SOP-report-FINAL-.pdf

GCM Praised in *Journal of Medical Ethics*

GCM received recognition for its advocacy efforts in a recent editorial by Solomon Benatar and Peter Singer in the *Journal of Medical Ethics*. The article, [Responsibilities in international research: a new look revisited](#), calls for increased advocacy around research responsibilities and points to GCM's analysis of the role of community advisory groups and its groundbreaking work on standards of care (SOC) in biomedical research. Specifically, the authors noted, "The Global Campaign for Microbicides is an excellent example of strong advocacy for attention to the full range of health and social needs that participants face during clinical research. This groups' comprehensive study in seven large-scale microbicide effectiveness trials, to evaluate what SOC was being provided, has gratifyingly shown that creative and innovative means are being explored by several research teams to implement a more broadly defined SOC in developing countries."

Two Katie West-authored and -co-authored publications were cited as part of Benatar and Singer's review, "[Community engagement in HIV prevention trials: evolution of the field and opportunities for growth](#)," and "[Mapping the Standards of Care at Microbicide Clinical Trials Sites](#)."



Read the full article

Solomon R Benatar and Peter A Singer. [Responsibilities in international research: a new look revisited](#). J Med Ethics 2010;36:194-197. Available at <http://jme.bmj.com/content/36/4/194.full>.

Read more about GCM's work on community engagement and standards of care

Katie West Slevin, Morenike Ukpong and Lori Heise. Community engagement in HIV prevention trials: evolution of the field and opportunities for growth. AIDS2031 Background Paper. Awaiting formal publication. Available at <http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/AIDS2031-CE.pdf>.

Heise L, Shapiro K, West Slevin K. Mapping the Standards of Care at Microbicide Clinical Trial Sites. Washington, DC: Global Campaign for Microbicides; 2008. Available at <http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/SOC.pdf>.

Advocacy in Action

Scattering the seeds: Kenyan advocates take knowledge of microbicides to their communities

By Pauline Irungu



An advocate raises a question during a community forum in Mombasa

When I first met her in August 2009 in a training session in Mombasa, Janet Musimbi struck me as very keen, focused person, eager to learn and inform others. She works for the International Centre for Reproductive Health - Kenya.

In June, Janet participated in GCM's prevention research literacy training in Nairobi, which brought together 15 advocates and community liaison staff from local clinical trial sites, with the aim of equipping them with the knowledge to confidently discuss microbicides with their communities.



As a way of enabling participants to share their learning with others, GCM requested that each one of them develop a personal work plan, committing them to conduct activities with their communities after the workshop.

In June, Janet gave a presentation on microbicides to seven post-test clubs in Mombasa, reaching a total of 40 participants. On July 15, she gave a brief talk on microbicides to 30 peer educators. In her presentations, she described microbicides, the HIV lifecycle, the mechanisms of action of microbicides, and the current state of the field of microbicides research. She also talked about other methods of HIV prevention. GCM's model of community capacity building is based on strengthening people's skills and encouraging them to reach into communities and share HIV-prevention research knowledge.

Time has proven my first impression of Janet correct: she is committed to informing her community and building awareness of new HIV-prevention options.

Ethical Review Studies Underway in Kenya and Zambia: To clarify how decisions are made to approve HIV-prevention research, GCM is undertaking two studies to analyze the institutional processes and ethical standards for the review of clinical research protocols. With projects under way in Kenya and Zambia, these studies are being conducted by Benjamin Mason Meier, assistant professor of Global Health Policy at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Working closely with GCM Director Yasmin Halima and the Kenya Medical Research Institute, Professor Meier traveled to Nairobi, where he interviewed 16 governmental and nongovernmental officials to assess Kenyan research approval processes.

Given the relative lack of information about these processes in Zambia, Meier has now begun a desk review of the stakeholders there with documented authority over the ethical review of microbicide trials. Out of these complementary studies, GCM seeks to develop detailed analyses of the landscape for clinical research review—outlining limitations in the laws, regulations, and stakeholders governing research-approval processes.

This information—to be compiled and disseminated in a series of project reports—will guide decisions about GCM commitments to research advocacy and lay a foundation by which policymakers can work with GCM to reform policies for reviewing and approving HIV-prevention research.

Improving Trial Communications and Media Coverage: GCM's [Deborah Baron](#), who has been coordinating the MMCI and mentors the GCM fellows, worked with fellow [Munyaradzi Chimwara](#) to conduct a media and communications training with researchers and trial staff from the Microbicides Trial Network, International Programme for Microbicides, and other research networks on 28 June in Harare, Zimbabwe.

Aside from a few media savvy veterans, most of the participants had minimal or no experience nor training in working with the media. One medical officer noted, "I don't like talking to media because they don't include what I tell them about my study anyway."

After spending a day learning tips and techniques on how to explain prevention research and his study more clearly, he realized that working with the media is a two-way street, and he now feels more equipped to meet them halfway.



The following day, the facilitators hosted a journalists' training with local print, radio, and TV journalists. Following sessions on the HIV life cycle and a talk on the ethics of research with a representative from the Medical Research Council, Baron and Chimwara led a discussion on the common challenges that journalists face. They offered creative ways to keep readers interested in HIV prevention, despite the infrequency of significant news to report.

"This will be the first training we've done since the launch of the [Communications Handbook](#) at Microbicides 2010. We're really excited to incorporate the tools and lessons learned from this new resource into a hands-on training with those working on the front lines of HIV-prevention research," said Baron, who has also served as Chimwara's mentor in the fellowship program.

Chimwara's fellowship project addresses how the media reports on and is engaged in HIV-prevention trials in Zimbabwe. He is identifying needs and opportunities—such as conducting these trainings—to improve the media's ongoing balanced, accurate, consistent and reliable reporting on HIV-prevention trials in Zimbabwe.

Are you interested in strengthening your skills at communicating about HIV-prevention research? Visit our download center at www.global-campaign.org/download and email us info@global-campaign.org.

Fellows Update: GCM fellow Munyaradzi Chimwara conducted workshops for researchers, community advisory board members (CAB), and journalists in Mutare, Zimbabwe, 14-17 June. On 23 July, he helped lead a training course for the CAB members of the Harare and Chitungwiza VOICE study sites. The CAPRISA 004 study results were disseminated there, followed by a media briefing on the results. Attendees spoke to and were quoted by interested journalists.

Male involvement in HIV prevention trials that enrol women participants

By Patrick Mwai, GCM Fellow, Kenya

In Kenya, the main public transport industry, commonly known as the *Matatu Industry*, employs thousands of young men as touts, conductors, and drivers--typically called a *Matatu crew*. On average these young men make about KES 1000 (USD 12) daily wage. With this disposable income, they end up spending their money on illicit alcohol, illicit drugs, and commercial sex. This lifestyle puts them at high risk of HIV infection.

Working in a district where there are clinical trials targeting sex workers, I targeted the local *Matatu crew* who are clients of sex workers to understand their knowledge and attitudes towards HIV prevention and clinical trials. I held four focus group discussions (FGDs) in four different locations namely: Changamwe, Likoni, Kisauni, and Mvita in Mombasa District.

From these discussions, I realised that there is still a lot of misinformation about HIV in this community. I recall one FGD session where a participant said that drinking the extract of boiled leaves of a local tree called *mkilifi* immediately after sex protects him from HIV infection. He repeats the ritual every time he has casual sex.



I also found that sexual violence is rife within some sections of the community. During the FGD session in Changamwe, as we discussed the potential benefit from microbicides, one participant remarked, “I can only hope that it is found sooner rather than later....I think of the wellbeing of my mother and my sisters...it will help them especially in an area like ours [referring to Bangladesh slums] where a day can’t pass without hearing of a rape case.”

A rather disturbing experience was one narration by a conductor who stated that in his home area of Ganze, one of the poorest constituencies in Kenya, he was once forced to use the polythene paper in which bread is usually wrapped and used it as a condom. There were no condoms in the local dispensary, and he could not afford to buy one at KES 10 (USD 0.13) at the local shop.

The four FGDs provided insight into sexual practices of men and their efforts to prevent themselves from being infected with HIV as well as their knowledge of clinical trials. The FGDs sought to find out how the *Matatu* crew would react if their partners (sex workers) told them that they were participating in for example a clinical trial and they had to insert the gel or take a pill before intercourse. Would they encourage the women in their lives to enrol? Do they have fears about such trials? The discussions documented some of the knowledge, fears and myths they have heard about clinical trials.

I am working on developing a culturally appropriate and attitude-based training curriculum to educate the community advisory groups and community leaders, media, and organizations working with women, men who have sex with men, and female sex workers and their clients on the conduct of clinical trials in Kenya. In order for them to reach out to their peers with accurate information to correct the myths and misconceptions that have seen clinical trial sites receive little or no support from the community and the target risk population involved in the trial .

Coming up...

GCM is planning for the upcoming Women’s HIV Prevention Symposium in Kenya slated for 31 August to 1 September in Nairobi. GCM is collaborating with Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO), Liverpool VCT, Action Aid Kenya, and UNAIDS, under the umbrella of the National AIDS Control Council to organize the Symposium.