



GC News #115: October 6, 2009

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

Research Update

Advocates' Tele-conference on Next Microbicide Trial Results

GCM and Partners in Action

Inaugural GCM Virtual Classroom Graduates First African and European Advocates
Participants Praise Kenyan skills-building Workshop for NGOs

Materials Update

Indian Prevention Advocates Publish India Microbicide Monitor
New and Updates GCM Materials on Microbicides, PrEP and ARV-based Prevention
GCM Releases South African Women's HIV Prevention Needs Summit Report

Visit the GC News Archives, at <http://www.global-campaign.org/GCArchives.htm>, for this and previous editions in PDF format.

Research Update

Advocates' Tele-conference on Next Microbicide Trial Results

At 6 AM in San Francisco and 8 PM in Bangkok, over 160 advocates from both cities and several other countries in between joined a tele-conference on September 30 to hear about trial results expected out by the end of November.

In about six weeks, the Microbicides Development Programme (MDP) is expected to announce the results of MDP 301, a Phase III trial of a candidate vaginal microbicide called PRO 2000. Results from a Phase IIb trial (HPTN 035) released last February suggested that PRO 2000 may have reduced the number of new HIV infections in women by 30%. Although [not statistically significant](http://www.global-campaign.org/HPTN-035.htm) (<http://www.global-campaign.org/HPTN-035.htm>), these results generated excitement. Since the MDP 301 study has enrolled three times more participants than the HPTN 035 study, it is expected to provide conclusive evidence of whether PRO 2000 works and – if so – how well.

Entitled, "Planning for partial protection and other possibilities", the call was co-convened by the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM), the African Microbicides Advocates Group and the AIDS Vaccines Advocacy Coalition. Presenters included MDP 301 Chief Investigator Sheena McCormack; Mitzy Gafos from the Africa Centre, a trial site for MDP 301 in South Africa; and Al Profy from Endo Pharmaceuticals,

producers of the PRO 2000 product. Other experts were also on hand to help answer the questions that poured in via telephone, e-mail and a web-based chat function accessible to online participants.

The questions ranged from practical concerns about the trial (*"Did women have difficulty remembering when they used a condom or condom with gel each time they had sex?"*) to the scientific (*"Pro-2000 is in the same class of microbicides as Carraguard and Cellulose Sulphate, both of which did not work. Is Pro-2000 different enough?"*) to the future-oriented (*"If Pro-2000 is found to be partially effective, and we have a partially effective vaccine, what does this mean?"*) A recording of the call is available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/MDP301.htm>, along with:

- A Q&A fact sheet prepared by MDP providing detailed information about the trial; and
- An Advocates Brief prepared by GCM. The brief highlights advocacy steps that HIV prevention advocates can take *now* to affect what happens in November if the trial data show that PRO 2000 is, in fact, a safe and moderately effective microbicide.

GCM will convene another Advocates Tele-briefing within a week of the announcement of the MDP 301 results. Stay tuned for announcements. Any new information will be posted on [GCM's MDP 301 page](#).

GCM and Partners in Action

Inaugural GCM Virtual Classroom Graduates First African and European Advocates



Rebekah Webb facilitated each of the seven study group sessions in cyberspace

Equipped with headsets, computers, and phones, students from as far apart as Zambia, Denmark, Rwanda and Portugal have been logging on to their computers every two weeks over the past four months to participate in seven cyber-space study sessions.

What were they studying? The [Microbicides Essentials course](#), a free on-line course designed to provide answers to difficult scientific and ethical questions advocates face every day. In addition to in-depth content on microbicides, the course covers the basics of HIV transmission and an overview of new prevention technologies in development and the advocacy landscape.

Organized and facilitated by Rebekah Webb, GCM's European Coordinator, these Virtual Classroom study sessions provided students the opportunity to engage with expert speakers and GCM staff on advocacy topics including female condoms, PrEP and rectal Microbicides; as well as to view scientific animations and take interactive quizzes.

"We were incredibly privileged to have the participation of some of the world's top microbicide scientists on this course," she noted "Professor Robin Shattock walked us through the HIV lifecycle, Dr Thomas Moench explained how microbicides work and Dr Khatija Ahmed talked about her experiences running the Carraguard Phase III trial – what a line-up!"



Dr Ian McGowan and Professor Robin Shattock were two of the distinguished microbicide scientists who logged into the virtual classroom to answer student questions.

Course participant Chibuike Amaechi, a member of New HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Society (NHVMAS) in Nigeria said: "My favourite session was the one on mechanisms of action. I was really thrilled by the animation of the viral transcriptase action on the normal cell". Harriet Langanke, a participant from GCM's partner organisation in Germany, valued the interactive experience: "It's completely different doing the course with the other students and experts than doing it alone".



Steve Sichone, a Community Educator and member of the GCM Community of Practice, joined the session on Myths and Rumours.

Students voted as "most popular" the session on busting the myths and rumours that can circulate around trials. Three members of the GCM Community of Practice on Community Involvement shared the techniques and practices they use to ensure that their communities remains accurately informed and are not misled about the research.

The inaugural GCM Virtual Classroom concluded with twelve European and African students completing the Microbicides Essentials course and receiving the much coveted course certificate.

Following the success of the inaugural Virtual Classroom, GCM hopes to offer a second course for African advocates in 2010. If you are interested in attending, please send an email with your name, contact information, and organizational affiliation to: info@global-campaign.org.

Participants Praise Kenyan skills-building workshop for NGOs

To express appreciation in Kiswahili, one says *Ahsante sana* (thank you very much). After an intense HIV skills-building workshop, 20 advocates from NGOs, CBOs, and the Ministry of Health, voiced these words to GCM and the Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO) for a training that was "well organised and in an easy to understand format":

"It was quite informative. *Ahsante sana*, please keep us in the loop of your contact and keep us updated."



A CAB member shares her experience on being an HIV prevention research ambassador in her community

On the 19 and 20th of August in Mombasa, Coast Province, GCM and KANCO talked with 15 women and 5 men about microbicides and PrEP as ARV-based prevention methods and how the clinical trials process to test their effectiveness works.

To build their advocacy skills on community, national and international levels, much of the workshop was devoted to exploring what it means to become an advocate and what advocates do in the field of HIV prevention research. For instance, a plenary session tackled how to identify and address the myths and rumours circulating in communities hosting clinical trials.

Punctuated by the sharing of experiences from KANCO, two of the local research institutions— the International Centre for Reproductive Health–Kenya (ICHRK) and Kenya Medical Research Institute

(KEMRI)—explained the microbicides and PrEP-related studies they are conducting in the province. Participants found these sessions about the local trials especially informative.

Participants raised several key issues and concerns during the workshop, including:

- The need for increased and consistent communication between advocates and researchers;
- The need for simplified information translated into Kiswahili;
- The possibility of resistance and toxicity with ARV-prevention methods;
- Concerns around access to products if they are licensed and distributed; and the
- The need to also involve men in trials that enroll women as participants, and for more attention to building the negotiation skills that women need to talk with their partners about using HIV prevention tools and even about their desire to participate in the trial.

The workshop culminated with the creation of action plans to implement post-workshop. Many participants voiced the need for further training. One of them summed it up saying, "The training has been good and educat[ive]; [I] wish it would have taken longer for deeper understanding...". GCM committed to continue offering technical support and information updates with the civil society members and other stakeholders.

Materials Update

Indian Prevention Advocates Publish India Microbicide Monitor

by Bobby Ramakant

Microbicides advocacy in India has come a long way over the past decade and a new publication, the MSI Microbicide Monitor, is the latest fruit of this progress. Providing a weekly snapshot of major microbicides-related news from around the world, the Monitor includes news highlights from countries where clinical trials are taking place, links to major microbicides-related events and advocacy opportunities and documents India-specific developments on microbicides research and advocacy. Produced and distributed by the Microbicides Society of India (MSI), the publication goes out to about 1,000 Indian microbicides advocates using a listserv (<http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/microbicide/>) created in 2005 at a South Indian advocacy workshop convened by the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM) and Indian Network of NGOs on HIV/AIDS (INN).

Collaborations initiated years ago and well nurtured by determined advocates, and have grown into what is now the Microbicides Society of India. "GCM's history of working with advocates, policy-makers and researchers in India makes the formation of the Microbicides Society of India and publication of its Monitor especially momentous to us," said GCM Director Yasmin Halima. "We began working in India in 2000 and co-hosted the 2003 National Policy Meeting on Microbicides and HIV Prevention Options for Women in New Delhi. That led to the formation of a multi-sectoral Microbicides [National] Working Group, coordinated for several years by GCM and PATH India. The Campaign has worked closely over the years with MSI President Dr [Badri N] Saxena and several MSI officers and Executive Committee members including Drs Sanjay Mehendale, Suniti Solomon, Nomita Chandhiok, SK Gupta [among others]," she continued, "and we congratulate them on their decision to establish this initiative," she concluded.

She added that GCM looks forward to ongoing synergies, including information sharing between the Monitor and F-SPOT (Female STI/HIV Prevention Options Today), an e-forum moderated by GCM. Created in 2007, F-SPOT provides a forum for Indian advocates and researchers to exchange information,

ideas, strategies, and lessons learned on female initiated prevention. GCM looks forward to promoting the MSI Microbicides Monitor to its participants and is confident that this new resource will further inform and stimulate discussion across advocacy, research and policy sectors.

The MSI Microbicides Monitor is available at <http://microbicide.blogspot.com>

To join F-SPOT, email the moderator, Bindiya Patel at bpatel@path.org

New and Updated GCM Materials on Microbicides, PrEP and ARV-based Prevention

GCM is developing a range of new materials as part of our decision to address the full range of new HIV prevention technologies (NPT) in the context of women's prevention needs. We are happy to announce new and updated materials that are ready for use. Please go you our website to see:

Microbicides: Imagine a product that could save lives a GCM Long Talk PowerPoint complete with slides and an easy-to-read script available at: <http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/Long-GCMMicrobicidesTalk.ppt>

PrEP: What is it? How may it help women? (Intro to PrEP PowerPoint) an updated GCM PowerPoint presentation complete with slides and an easy-to-read script available at: http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/GCM_IntroToPrEP.ppt

ARV-Based Prevention: What it means for women (ARV-Based Prevention PowerPoint) a new GCM Powerpoint requested from advocates in South Africa who did not want to address only microbicides or PrEP, but both. This presentation is available, complete with slides and an easy-to-read script, at: <http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/GCM-ARV-Prevention.ppt>

As with all of GCM's standardized powerpoints, this is designed for use by advocates who do not have a scientific background. We provide these to make it as easy as possible for our civil society allies to provide accurate, accessible information in their own communities.

Microbicides: What Do They Mean for Women? a new, two-page (one sheet) GCM fact sheet, also designed for use by advocates and other civil society groups available on-line at:

Word: [http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/FS-WDIMFW\[E\].docx](http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/FS-WDIMFW[E].docx)

PDF: [http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/FS-WDIMFW\[E\].pdf](http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/FS-WDIMFW[E].pdf)

GCM Releases South African Women's HIV Prevention Needs Summit Report

The Global Campaign is excited to announce the release of a new report, *South African Women's HIV Prevention Needs Summit Report*, a concept note outlining the rationale, objectives and the process for the Women's sector HIV prevention summit. The goal of the summit was to conclude how to contribute to the women's prevention agenda in South Africa and strengthen the capacity of advocates to engage in issues that support women's prevention needs. The report is available for download at:

- **Full Report:** <http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/Womens-Prevention-Summit.doc>

As with all GCM materials, reproduction of these tools is encouraged. Please feel free to download them, translate them, adapt them for local audiences and use them in any way that will make this information

more widely available. They are provided as a free resource to the field. Feedback on these is also welcome and can be sent to info@global-campaign.org

What is GCM Doing this Month?

Training for Advocates in Nairobi

21-22 October 2009

Training for Advocates in Nairobi

GCM in collaboration with the Kenya AIDS NGOs Consortium (KANCO) and the Partners in Prevention Thika Site will conduct a two-day skills building workshop for 20 civil society members and other stakeholders drawn from the greater Nairobi province on woman-initiated HIV prevention options.