



## The Global Campaign News April 7, 2003

Welcome to the biweekly *Global Campaign News*! The *Global Campaign News* is a forum for international exchange on microbicide activities and information with an aim to build a more informed and integrated movement for microbicide development and other prevention options against HIV and STDs.

**NEW!** on the GCM website:

[Microbicides Factsheets in 5 languages!](#) (click to view)

[Microbicides on Campus](#) (click to view)

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### **IPM Receives Major Award from the Gates Foundation**

Congratulations to the International Partnership for Microbicides, [www.ipm-microbicides.org](http://www.ipm-microbicides.org), for receiving \$60 million from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This is the largest single grant ever made to support microbicides research and is a significant outcome of the hard and dedicated work of advocates. [Click here to view the press release!](#)

### **Update on N-9 Activities**

For the last year, the Global Campaign has been working on multiple fronts to counter the fact that many individuals are still seeking out and using lubricants and condoms containing Nonoxynol-9 in the mistaken belief that they offer added protection against HIV and STDs. Because these products, especially if used rectally, may actually increase infection risk, we have been advocating for their removal from the market.

Since releasing the "Call to Discontinue Nonoxynol-9 for Rectal Use" last September, we have seen some significant progress as a result of this advocacy. Within the United States:

- All major lubricant manufacturers have now agreed to stop adding N-9 to the sexual lubricants they produce. While lubricants containing N-9 may still be available in some retail locations, new lots being shipped do not have it.

- Several condom manufacturers have stopped production of condoms with N-9. Among these are: Planned Parenthood, Johnson & Johnson's condom-producing subsidiary in Brazil and Mayer Laboratories--distributor of Maxx and Kimono condoms.
- On March 18, California Assemblyman Paul Koretz (D-West Hollywood) introduced Assembly Joint Resolution 16 that urges the FDA to ban the sale of condoms and sexual lubricants containing N-9. AJR 16 also calls on manufacturers to stop producing N-9 condoms and asks retailers to stop selling these harmful products. For a copy of the text of ARJ 16 and talking points supplied by Koretz' office, go to <http://www.global-campaign.org/featuredevent.htm>
- US Campaign sites have organized "field trips" to local retail outlets to encourage them to remove existing stock of condoms and lubricants containing N-9. You can download the flyer for retailer by [clicking here](#). The Chicago site has approached the corporate headquarters of the drugstore chain Walgreens, about implementing a company-wide ban.

In the UK:

- The UK/Ireland Campaign for Microbicides has issued its own "UK Call for the Removal of N-9 from Condoms and Lubricants" (based in the Global Campaign's Call) and is gathering endorsements for it from leading scientists, advocates and NGOs in their region.

For a full accounting of Campaign activities on N-9 both in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom, go to <http://www.global-campaign.org/featuredevent.htm>

## **New Communication Tool Advances UNIFEM and UNAIDS Commitment to Reversing Epidemic**

This new gender and HIV/AIDS web portal will provide researchers, policy-makers and practitioners access to cutting edge information on women and HIV. Developed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the portal is a one-stop online resource center on the gender dimensions of the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

The web portal will be a constantly evolving, multi-dimensional and dynamic virtual space that promotes understanding, knowledge sharing, and action on HIV/AIDS as a gender and human rights issue. User-friendly, informative and interactive, the site offers research, training materials, surveys, advocacy tools, current news and opinion pieces by leading experts, and women's stories from the field. Plans are also underway to house a database of "experts," which will serve as a technical and networking vehicle for national and global gender and HIV/AIDS specialists.

Please visit the gender and HIV/AIDS web portal at, <http://www.GenderandAIDS.org>.

## **"Relationship Power for Women Leads to Higher Rates of Condom Use"**

*Source: Women's Health Weekly, March 7, 2003*

United States researchers have confirmed long-held assumptions about relationship power and safe sex. "Women's ability to negotiate safer sexual practices, particularly condom use, is a vital component of HIV/STD prevention strategies," according to Julie Pulerwitz, seconded PATH staff and colleagues from the Population Council. "Gender-based power imbalances may constrain women's negotiation ability, yet few empirical studies have tested the hypothesis that sexual relationship power constitutes a key factor in condom use and negotiation." The researchers applied "a new measure - the Sexual Relationship Power Scale (SRPS)" to data "collected from 388, mostly Latina, women at an urban community health center in Massachusetts."

Study data showed that "population attributable risk estimates indicate that 52% of the lack of consistent condom use among women can be attributed to low sexual relationship power," Pulerwitz and coauthors reported. They found that "women with high levels of relationship power were five times as likely as women with low levels to report consistent condom use, after controlling for socio-demographic and psychosocial variables."

"The strong association between the Sexual Relationship Power Scale and consistent condom use supports the hypothesis that relationship power plays a key role in safer sex decision making," the researchers concluded. "These findings underscore the importance of including the issue of relationship power in the design and implementation of programs that promote sexual and reproductive health, as well as research investigating condom use and HIV risk." The study, "Relationship Power, Condom Use and HIV Risk Among Women in the USA" was published in *AIDS Care* (2002;14(6):789-800).

## **Microbicides in India: Microbicides' Stakeholder Meeting**

*Source: Copyright SEA-AIDS 2002, February 2002*

The urgent need for expanded HIV prevention options for women in India was addressed once again at this year's National Convention of Indian Network of NGOs (IN N) on HIV/AIDS. The Seventh National Convention, which brought together over 200 delegates from the entire sub-continent as well as international participants, was held in Madurai, Tamil Nadu from February 26-28, 2003.

During the opening session of the second day, Ananthy Thambinayagam of the Global Campaign and Bobby Ramakant an HDN Key Correspondent, presented a recap of the "Community Stakeholders' Meeting on Prevention Options for Women in India", which was held last October in New Delhi. The Stakeholders' Meeting was jointly convened by the Program for Appropriate Technology in Health (PATH New Delhi), the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM, Washington DC), the Indian Network of NGOs on HIV/AIDS (IN N) and the Gujarat AIDS Prevention unit (GAP). It aimed to inform and prepare the Indian NGO community towards active participation in expansion of women-focused HIV prevention options.

As recounted by Thambinayagam, one of the major outcomes of the October meeting was a clear-cut support from UNAIDS and NACO country heads. Dr. Miller, UNAIDS Country Programme Advisor for India at the time, said that "UNAIDS strongly endorses all efforts to increase prevention options for women...there is an urgent need to expand sites of testing of female condoms and accelerate Phase III trials of Microbicides.

Dr. Meenakshi Ghosh, who heads the National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) said that "...existing prevention options - male condoms, mutual monogamy and STD treatment - are not feasible for millions of women. Women are not sufficiently independent or empowered to negotiate condom use, fidelity or even to abandon partnerships that put them at risk." She further added that "people should not be embarrassed to buy condoms, rather they should be proud because buying condoms mean they are responsible, and buying female condoms mean that they are doubly responsible."

[Click here](#) to read more on about the advocacy discussion in India

### **Gel may be sexual disease barrier**

*By Amanda Dunn, Health Reporter, March 20 2003*

Human trials on a vaginal gel that may prevent the transmission of HIV and other sexual diseases could begin in Melbourne within months after successful animal trials. The gel was developed by scientists at Melbourne company Starpharma. It has just been tested successfully on monkeys by researchers at the University of Washington.

Starpharma chief executive John Raff said the gel, which is put in the vagina before sex, had also proved successful in preventing transmission of genital herpes and chlamydia. The gel worked by preventing the fusion of the virus with cells in the body.

Dr Raff said microbicides were the primary strategy for preventing the spread of HIV, as vaccine trials to date had proved unsuccessful. The next phase would involve further tests on monkeys to examine the minimum dosage required, and the effects of repeat doses.

Executive director of the Victorian AIDS Council, Mike Kennedy, said microbicides were a particularly important development for preventing HIV transmission because they gave control to women so they did not have to rely on their partners to use a condom.

"It shifts the capacity to control HIV infection to the one who is likely to be affected by penetrative sex," he said.

President of the Australasian Society for HIV Medicine, Andrew Grulich, warned that the road from animal trials to human trials and then market availability was a long one, and researchers did not know how successful microbicides would be in humans. The results, however, were promising, he said.

Dr Raff said Starpharma was looking at adapting the gel so that it could be used anally.

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We welcome your input and contributions. Correspondence can be addressed to [info@global-campaign.org](mailto:info@global-campaign.org). If you would like to unsubscribe to the Global Campaign News, please reply to this e-mail with the subject line: UNSUBSCRIBE.