



The Global Campaign News April 29, 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.

In this issue:

New Microbicides Development Act

Microbicides in Europe

HIV Vaccine Symposium: More Questions than Answers

Gatekeeper's Perspectives on Microbicides in Tamil Nadu

Microbicides advocacy building momentum in India

Female Health Company announces new female condom

New Publication! *Microbicides: What are they and why do we need them?*

The New Microbicides Development Act is here!

On April 10, 2003, Sen. Jon Corzine (D-N.J.) introduced the Microbicide Development Act of 2003. The bill's co-sponsors to date are Senators Olympia Snowe (R-Maine), Christopher Dodd (D-Conn.), Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), Maria Cantwell (D-Wash.), Patty Murray (D-Wash), Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), Richard Durbin (D-Ill.), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.)

If passed, this Act will greatly expand the US government's commitment to bringing a safe and effective microbicide to market. The Microbicides Development Act of 2003 (S. 859) would:

1. establish a branch dedicated to microbicide research and development within the NIH's National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases -- thus creating a single line of administrative accountability and funding coordination;
2. authorize increased funding at the CDC, NIH and USAID for the development of microbicidal products; and
3. require coordination between NIH and other Federal agencies supporting microbicide development, including the CDC and USAID.

Overall, the goal of the bill is to achieve better coordination and expanded resources for microbicide research and development activities at the NIH, CDC and USAID. A similar measure is expected to be introduced in the House of Representatives later this year.

How can you help? [E-mail your Senators](#) right now and let them know you support the Microbicides Development Act!

Microbicides in Europe

Except from "Microbicides –The Case for Europe," published by Cairde, a GCM partner group in Ireland.

As of the end of 2001, 550, 000 people were estimated to be living with HIV/AIDS in Western Europe. The total numbers of cases of AIDS and deaths from AIDS- related illnesses have declined rapidly since 1996 with the introduction of highly active antiretroviral therapy for HIV. However, AIDS cases attributed to heterosexual contact have been rising in the EU, surpassing AIDS cases among gay men and injecting drug users for the first time in 2001. While the overall number of newly diagnosed HIV infections shows no consistent upward trend, changes within new cases of HIV give cause for comment. Heterosexual transmission of HIV has increased sharply in the EU while new cases among injecting drug users and gay men remain largely stable. Each year since 1999 new cases of HIV attributed to heterosexual contact have been the most common route of HIV transmission reported in the EU. A corollary of the rise in heterosexual cases of HIV and AIDS is the increased number of women living with HIV/AIDS in the EU, with women making up almost 50 per cent of new cases of HIV in 2001. This has implications for HIV/AIDS prevention policy in the region, which has until now been largely developing capacity to control HIV among gay men and injecting drug users. While awareness of HIV/AIDS may be high among women in general, awareness amongst women who are most at risk of HIV may be inadequate. This poses serious challenges to mounting an effective response to the increasing impact of HIV on women within the EU. Migration and mobility issues are now recognized as a key undercurrent of HIV/AIDS in the EU. Since the late eighties a growing proportion of heterosexual cases of HIV in the UK (72 per cent in 2001) have been among people from countries where there are generalized epidemics, the majority of whom are women. A similar pattern is now apparent in many other member states, including Ireland, and anecdotally in France, Italy and Spain where data is not available. Immigrants and other mobile populations tend to have poorer access to health services leading to later presentation to diagnose and treat their HIV infection. This in turn, exacerbates their vulnerability to HIV. Since 2001, ethnicity data is being collected with HIV and AIDS notifications across Europe to allow for improved monitoring of mobility trends and improved targeting of affected communities.

To read the entire document "Microbicides – the case for Europe," [click here](#).
For microbicides activities in Europe, [click here](#).

HIV Vaccine Symposium: More Questions Than Answers

by Kristen Kresge—amFAR Global Link

Kristen Kresge of amFAR reviews the latest news out of the Keystone Symposium on Vaccine Research, including the scientist's most recent interpretation of the VaxGen trial results. Regrettably, developing a successful vaccine is proving extraordinarily difficult, with many false turns and disappointments. To read more, [click here](#).

Gatekeeper's Perspectives on Microbicides Introduction in Tamil Nadu

The Global Campaign for Microbicides recently conducted a study in Tamil Nadu, India to identify some of the socio-cultural and structural issues that are likely to be potential barriers or catalysts for the introduction of microbicides in this state. The three-week study examined the perspectives of key policy-makers and discussants at the state and national levels involved with HIV prevention. The assessment, which was conducted through in-depth interviews, explored topics such as the need for female-initiated prevention options, potential user-groups, the policy environment and cultural considerations for introduction and harm-reduction.

India is already the site of clinical trials of microbicides, and several studies have begun to demonstrate the demand and acceptability of microbicides at the community-level. However, providers, community leaders and policy makers will be among the important “gatekeepers” who will help define future access to microbicides. This study attempts to assess possible factors that will affect microbicide introduction in Tamil Nadu and, moreover, understand what is needed to create a receptive policy environment beforehand.

In a country where nearly four million individuals of the adult population are estimated to be living with HIV, 1.5 million are women and infection rates among them are rising. In the state of Tamil Nadu, incidence rates have soared to become the second highest in India. Women are particularly at high risk in Tamil Nadu, where the main mode of transmission is heterosexual intercourse and there is reported to be one of the largest numbers of female commercial sex workers in India. Although the rates of infection in Tamil Nadu are daunting, the state has a high number of medical research groups as well as a history of NGO activism. It is also often praised for launching one of the best state-led prevention programs in India.

For more information on the study, please contact Ananth Thambinayagam at athambinayagam@path-dc.org.

Microbicides advocacy building momentum in India

Momentum is growing in India around woman-controlled prevention of HIV. Microbicides featured prominently on the agenda of the Seventh National Convention of Indian Network of NGOs (IN N) on HIV/AIDS, held in Madurai, Tamil Nadu from February 26-28, 2003. Global Campaign partner groups met afterwards to further refine a countrywide strategy for microbicide advocacy.

The next major activity on the GCM agenda is a National Stakeholders Meeting, planned for the beginning of October in New Delhi, India. With funding from USAID, this meeting will continue the dialogue about microbicides among “national stakeholders” --individuals and institutions that are likely to have a role in making safe, effective microbicides widely available as an HIV prevention option in India. “Stakeholders” include people of influence in HIV/AIDS and reproductive health policy, health research and professional institutions, international and donor agencies, government, regulatory agencies and private industry. Specifically, the goals of the meeting are to:

- Raise awareness of the potential of microbicides in addressing women's vulnerabilities to HIV and AIDS among national stakeholders.
- Inform national stakeholders of the status of microbicide research and development in India and elsewhere, and of the global advocacy movement to support this research.
- Address specific concerns that national stakeholders may have about microbicides.
- Foster commitment among national stakeholders to support initiatives that raise awareness, accelerate research and development, plan for access, and strengthen accountability as we strive towards developing safe and effective microbicides.

The stakeholders meeting in October will be followed by a scientific panel on microbicides, chaired by Dr. Alan Stone of the United Kingdom, at the 4th International Conference on AIDS in India from 9-12 November 2003, in Chennai, India.

For more information about activities in India and to download the Position Paper from the Community Stakeholders' Meeting, visit our [India page](#) on our website.

Female Health Announces Proprietary Second Generation Product

Chicago, March 27, PRNewswire-FirstCall

The Female Health Company announced that it has filed a patent on a second-generation version of its Reality Female Condom™. The Company initiated development to find a product that presented the same physical and very positive clinical and acceptability performance but that could be produced at a significantly reduced cost compared to its current product. The Company believes that it has been successful. Studies required to establish comparability to the original Reality Female Condom™ are now on-going.

The female condom is mainly distributed in developing countries where HIV/AIDS is rampant and where the costs associated with prevention programming are critical to governments' ability to implement education and outreach activities. The Company believes that by reducing the cost of female condoms, they can increase the product's accessibility to women and accelerate its market penetration. Studies have shown that female condoms are an effective barrier to the viruses and bacteria that cause sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Studies also show that when female condoms are made available along with male condoms, the number of protected sex acts increases.

For the entire article, click on http://biz.yahoo.com/prnews/030327/cgth006a_1.html

New Microbicide Resources On-Line!

The Association of Reproductive Health Professionals (ARHP) has now made available online their special "microbicide" edition of their news magazine for health providers, entitled *Health and Sexuality*. "[Microbicides: What They Are-Why We Need Them](#)," provides an excellent, and beautifully produced, review of the field.

We welcome your input and contributions. Correspondence can be addressed to 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.