



Global Campaign News – Issue #35 May 25, 2004

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. This and previous issues of GC News are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcnews.htm>

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Microbicides at the 4th Nigerian AIDS Conference

The 4th National Conference on AIDS in Nigeria (www.aidsconferenceng.org) took place from May 2 thru 5th with the theme, "HIV/AIDS in Nigeria: Research challenges and lessons learnt." The conference had a participation of about 5000 people and was co-organized by several public and civil society institutions.

Dr. Kim Dickson, of the Department for International Development (DFID) and a member of the Global Campaign Steering Committee, spoke at the opening ceremony about the need for research attention to be devoted to new preventive technologies such as microbicides and vaccines.

Professor Femi Soyinka, Chair of ICASA 2005 - the 14th International Conference on AIDS/STDs in Africa to be held in Abuja next year, voiced the perspective of many: "This conference center (referring to the International Conference Centre, Abuja) has hosted several conferences on HIV/AIDS where declarations were made. We are not looking for another declaration. We want to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS and provide care and support. We hope to move forward in our response to the epidemic and this conference will provide an opportunity for us to define our strategies." The National Coordinator of the Network of People Living with HIV and AIDS in Nigeria (NEPWHAN) made a passionate plea to delegates, "People Living with HIV in Nigeria (PLWH) do not need well polished speeches. There is too much lip service within the national response and this needs to change. We are hopeful that delegates will leave this conference with the understanding that providing for the welfare of PLWH is a central part of the national response," he said.

Three sessions during the conference focused on microbicides and vaccines. The first session gave scientists working in these fields, among them Drs Simon Agwale, Sade Ogunsola and O. Adeiga, an opportunity to share their ongoing research related to HIV vaccines and microbicides in Nigeria. The second session was intended to be a roundtable exchange between scientists and non-scientists, but few people were able to attend. The third session, "Community preparedness for HIV vaccine and microbicides," was facilitated by the Nigeria HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Group (NHVMAG). This final session was very well attended, provided a lot of information, and generated numerous questions and discussion from participants.

One of the questions that kept coming up was 'How can we become part of the advocacy process?' Participants felt strongly that microbicides should have been discussed extensively during the plenary session and efforts must be made to ensure that it is discussed extensively during ICASA 2005. The conference underlined for many that an intense need exists to raise awareness about HIV vaccines and microbicides and to recognize the role that community members can play.

Thank you to Omololu Falobi and Olayide Akanni for providing the information and quotes for this article!
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Community forum in Atlanta focuses on men who have sex with men

On Thursday, May 13, 2004, the Georgia Campaign for Microbicides, in collaboration with Aniz, Inc., AIDS Treatment Initiatives, Cobb/Douglas County Board of Health, SomeoneCares, Inc., AID Atlanta, Emory University Hope Clinic, AIDS Survival Project, Sisterlove, Inc., NAESM, and Agouron/Pfizer, Inc. presented "Let's Talk About Sex! - Microbicides: A Brand New Concept in HIV and STD Prevention" in Atlanta, GA.

Dr. William Blake of Emory University's Hope Clinic and Craig Washington of Positive Impact were the featured speakers. The program addressed what microbicides are and how they will work for men who have sex with men. Presenters also talked about local and worldwide advocacy efforts for the development of a safe and effective microbicide. "67 people attended this exciting event. It was a great evening of education, food, and raffle prizes!" reported Terri L. Wilder, Georgia Campaign for Microbicides coordinator.

Scandinavian advocacy reaches Oslo

On May 14th, members of Norwegian civil society including health providers, NGOs representatives, academics and civil servants met to discuss microbicides and the need for Norwegian funding for microbicide research and development. Hosted by the vibrant HIV positive support agency Pluss-lma, the meeting was enlivened by the challenges of equipment failure! Zeda Rosenberg, from the International Partnership for Microbicides, demonstrated her artistic talent by drawing her own illustrations of the biology of HIV transmission. Rebekah Webb of Global Campaign Europe provided participants with an overview of how they can become involved in regional advocacy efforts. It is hoped that Norway will increase its giving to microbicides research by the end of 2004.

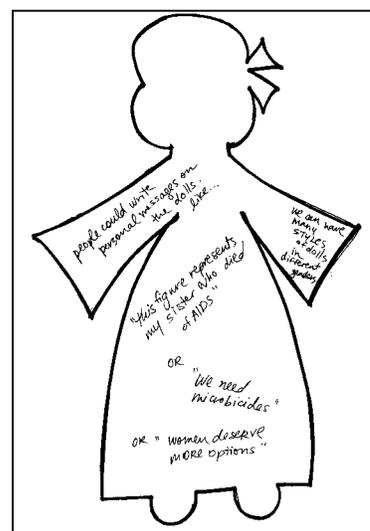
Paper Figures: Please give us your input on a new campaign idea!

The Global Campaign for Microbicides has been thinking about how we might do a concrete, unifying project in which microbicide advocates all around the world can participate. Ideally, we'd like something that captures public attention, communicates the worldwide demand that exists for microbicides and highlights the urgency of the issue. It would be great to have a visual symbol that people associate with microbicide advocacy, as they associate the red ribbon with AIDS awareness. One idea we've had is to mount a Campaign using these figures. We call them "paper dolls" in the US, but you may have another name for them.

How would it work? The Global Campaign would develop and produce images cut out of paper that would come in four or five basic shapes and colors and "ethnicities." Some would represent female figures and some male. One sample is pictured in GC News #35 – www.global-campaign.org/resources/gcnews.htm

If there is consensus that this activity has the potential to be productive and powerful, we would send supplies to all of our partners and post them on our website. We would ask you to distribute them at events, presentations, conferences, in clinics, wherever you go to talk about microbicides. We would want you to invite people (to write or draw something on one of the figures to express their support for microbicides. For example, people could write the names of friends or family whose life could have been saved if they had microbicides.

As you collect completed figures, you would send them back to the Global Campaign (we would pay for postage). We would string them together to make long chains of figures, each a distinctive representation of the person who signed and/or decorated it. These chains could then be used at a big press event, possibly coinciding with the UN General Assembly Special Session on AIDS in 2005.



What do we need from you right now? Could you please give us your honest feedback about this idea? Obviously, this project will require time and energy. We don't want to start it unless it is something that our advocacy partners around the world are really interested in and see as being productive. So we would really appreciate it if you could let us know what you think of this idea. If you like it, why? If you don't, why not? Finally, if you have other ideas for a project, please let us know!

Unproven Claims Watch

One of the Global Campaign's "watchdog" functions is to look out for products that are being promoted publicly as microbicides when their safety and efficacy have not been proven. Unfortunately, women's urgent need for microbicides creates a market for unproven products promoted on the basis of false claims (see Freedom Lube in GC News #26 and Irish Moss and Erogel in GC News # 24). At best, such products may be a useless waste of money. At worst, they may cause internal damage or increase risk.

Some conference participants at Microbicides 2004 reported having heard that one could create a vaginal microbicide by mixing tea tree oil with a common vegetable shortening (i.e., Crisco). Tea tree oil, derived from Australian tea trees, contains an antiseptic ingredient called *Melaleuca alternifolia*. The oil is widely used as an external antiseptic on its own and as an ingredient in dozens of hygiene products including soap, shampoo, acne lotion, toothpaste, etc.

To our knowledge, no research is currently underway to evaluate the safety or effectiveness of tea tree oil as a vaginal or rectal microbicide. When used externally, it can cause a skin rash in some people --a factor that raises serious concern about the potential impact that its internal use might have.

If you have heard of this product being recommended as a microbicide, or have knowledge of other untested products being similarly promoted, please report this to Anna Forbes of the Global Campaign for Microbicides (asforbes@path-dc.org). We will report such information in future issues of GC News, as it is received.

Get Media Alerts on microbicides from Google for free

Although faithful GC News readers get all the latest news on microbicides already, you may also want to sign up for a free media alert service offered by Google.com. The alert will send links and short paragraphs whenever the word "microbicide" appears in news articles from around the world. To sign up, just follow these steps:

1. Go to: <http://www.google.com/newsalerts?hl=en>
2. Type in microbicide into the News Search" box
3. Tell them how often you want alerts
4. Type in your email address
5. You will receive an email from them almost immediately. Just click on the "verify this news alert request".
6. Your media alerts will begin after that!

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues! 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.