



Global Campaign News – Issue #37 June 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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Announcing a new Factsheet on Youth and Microbicides

The Global Campaign is pleased to announce the newest addition to our series of factsheets. Fact Sheet #18, “Youth Advocates for Microbicides: Changing The Future of HIV Prevention” is now available on our website at www.global-campaign.org/download.htm. The factsheet provides a brief summary of HIV infections amongst youth, the biological and socio-economic factors that make youth especially susceptible to HIV, and why there is a need for youth involvement in microbicide advocacy. We hope you will find this, and the rest of our series, helpful in your own work.

Dublin seminar on HIV/AIDS among women sparks interest in microbicides

On June 2nd, 25 women gathered at the Whitefriar Community Centre in Dublin to discuss the ways in which gender inequalities are driving HIV transmission within Ireland and across the globe. The meeting was jointly convened by Dublin-based minority health NGO, Cairde, and the National Women’s Council of Ireland. A series of strong speakers painted a picture of poverty, discrimination, stigma and powerlessness - equally true for women in Dublin as in rural villages in Zambia. The responses from the participants – including health providers, civil servants, missionaries, refugee support agencies, and women’s groups – reflected a wish to meet together more often in the future to advance these issues.

Breda Gahan, HIV/AIDS Programme Advisor for Concern, an Ireland based development and emergency relief organization, spoke of a grandmother who had lost all 9 of her adult children to AIDS and is now in sole care of 14 grandchildren. She explained that of the 40% of people receiving ARV treatment in clinics in Zambia, only 3% are women. Ann Nolan, Director of the Dublin AIDS Alliance, cited a local ‘Teenage Tolerance’ study in which young men and women described coercion to have sex as ‘normal’. Patricia Mendes, Community Liaison Officer at Cairde, highlighted that migrant women living with HIV are finding it impossible to introduce condoms into their long-term relationships without support.

A clear message emerged from all the presentations – the urgent need to empower women and address the inequalities that leave them vulnerable to HIV. Rebekah Webb, Coordinator of GC Europe, concluded the seminar with a presentation on how microbicides might offer a way to ameliorate women’s dilemmas as they seek to protect themselves and their partners from HIV. While it was clear that microbicides would not empower women overnight, scientists and community advocates are working together to find a non-condom option. Participants were invited to join local efforts to raise awareness of the need for microbicides around the world, and across the ‘emerald isle’.

Soap and Water as a Microbicide?

In October 2003 University of California researcher Jay Levy and his team announced that soap and water kill HIV in an article appearing in the peer-reviewed journal "Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy". Combining a lather of Ivory (a common bar soap) and tap water with varying amounts of HIV-infected vaginal and seminal fluids in test tubes, they showed a 30-fold HIV inactivation rate and a 57% - 87% reduction in white blood cells (also key players in the HIV transmission process).

Although these trials confirm the efficacy of using soap to clean diaphragms and other devices exposed to HIV, the news became potentially problematic when POZ magazine (June issue) asked if this meant that women could use a soap and water douche for protection if the condom breaks. POZ reported Levy's response as, "It's probably better than nothing in an emergency. Only I wouldn't recommend it as a [regular] method." He noted that "repeated exposure to soap and water can weaken vaginal and rectal defenses. In the end, it can make you more susceptible to infection."

As microbicide advocates, we need to be sure that this word of caution is strongly emphasized. We know from the Nonoxynol-9 trials that detergent products (including soap) can damage mucous membranes, especially if used rectally. If vaginal or rectal irritation results, HIV transmission may be facilitated.

As always, we need to guard against public messages that lead people to use available products as microbicides despite their unproven safety and efficacy. The impact of soap against HIV in the test tube tells us nothing about its impact on vaginal and rectal walls or how douching with a soap solution might affect the user's HIV risk during her/his next act of intercourse.

The full citation for the journal article is: Virucidal Efficacy of Soap and Water against HIV in Genital Secretions. *Antimicrobial Agents and Chemotherapy*, Oct 2003, p. 3321-3322, Vol. 47, No. 10. Jonathan Z. Li, Elizabeth C. Mack, and Jay A. Levy.

Short film on the need for microbicides is taking shape

In recent years the Global Campaign has received an overwhelming number of requests to produce a video to articulate the need for woman-initiated HIV/STD prevention methods, the potential role of microbicides, and the importance of public sector leadership on this issue.

In response to this need the Campaign has recently received limited funding from USAID to produce a broadcast-quality, short film. We have decided to produce both a 20 minute video, that will be divided into "chapters" of various stories and as well as 8-10 minute summary piece. We aim to use the video in many ways:

- To more enhance understanding of the global AIDS epidemic and the vulnerability of women to HIV and STDs
- To accompany presentations or skills-building workshop on microbicides
- As an organizing tool for local campaign sites to hold high-profile events that could catalyze local press and capture policymakers' attention.
- To engage donor communities on the importance of both private and public sector leadership and generate real commitment among influential policymakers and constituents to accelerate research into user-controlled HIV prevention methods.

The Global Campaign for Microbicides has been working closely with the film makers, Connie Rinehart and Tom Donohue of Laughing Dog Productions, to develop a "story line" that captures the most salient issues on the need for microbicides and to assure that filming is conducted ethically, with respect for the individuals, communities and organizations involved.

Filming started in March 2004 and has already taken place in several locations to demonstrate that women's vulnerability and the shared need for microbicides in many parts of the world. In particular, filming has taken place in Baltimore where pre-clinical research is taking place and the need for microbicides in the local community is high because of HIV or STD rates, in the UK during the Microbicides 2004 Conference, and several locations in South Africa--Durban, Johannesburg, Hlabisa, and Mtubatuba--to show communities where the need for microbicides is urgent and clinical trials are also taking place.

We will disseminate this video to all of our partner groups as well as other interested organizations/individuals. The video should be ready for distribution in September 2004 in numerous formats. Announcements will be sent out via GC News and we will have an order form on the Global Campaign website.

New report from the Global HIV Prevention Working Group

The Global HIV Prevention Working Group is a panel of nearly 50 leading public health experts, clinicians, biomedical and behavioral researchers, and people affected by HIV/AIDS, convened by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. The Working Group seeks to inform global policy-making, program planning, and donor decisions on HIV prevention, and to advocate for a comprehensive response to HIV/AIDS that integrates prevention and care. In July 2002, the Working Group issued its first report, *Global Mobilization for HIV Prevention: A Blueprint for Action*. In May 2003 it released *Access to HIV Prevention: Closing the Gap*. This month, the Global HIV Prevention Working Group issued its latest report, *HIV Prevention in the Era of Expanded Treatment Access*.

The report voices concern that HIV treatment availability could shift attitudes about the threat of HIV/AIDS in the developing world, potentially resulting in increased risk behavior and the continued expansion of the global AIDS epidemic. "Treatment access in the developing world will improve the lives of millions, but also presents new challenges to HIV prevention," said David Serwadda, MBChB, MPH, of the Institute of Public Health at Makerere University in Kampala, Uganda, and co-chair of the Working Group. "In Uganda, we have seen how HIV prevention can work, and we are now undertaking a major effort to incorporate prevention counseling into treatment programs. The goal is to ensure that treatment does not have the unintended consequence of increasing risk behavior."

The report documents early successes in developing countries that embarked on coordinated prevention and treatment programs, such as Brazil, Botswana, Haiti, and South Africa. Because increased HIV testing rates are critical to both treatment and prevention efforts, the report also calls for HIV testing to be universally offered in all health care settings in areas where ART is available with the option to opt out for those who don't want to be tested. Experts estimate that today only 10 percent of HIV-positive people in developing countries are aware of their infection.

The Working Group calls for annual funding for HIV prevention and care to increase from \$4.7 billion in 2003 to \$10.5 billion in 2005 and \$15 billion in 2007, as recommended by UNAIDS. Their report lays out a four-point plan of action:

1. Integrate HIV Prevention and Treatment by providing HIV prevention in ART and other health care settings *and expanding access to HIV testing*
2. Develop Prevention Strategies for HIV-Positive People
3. Develop prevention messages for HIV Negative People to include risk reduction messaging and the fact that ART is not a cure. Along these lines, surveillance systems need to be set up to monitor behavioural impact of ART
4. Fund a Comprehensive Response that involves simultaneously scaling up prevention and treatment programs as well as increasing funding for research into a broad array of potential prevention technologies.

Global Campaign for Microbicides at Bangkok

The Campaign invites you to join us at the 2004 International AIDS Conference in Bangkok next month. Stop by our booth at the NGO Exhibition to pick up some of our new materials and find out what we're up to! We'll be Booth #304. In addition, below are some highlights of where you can find us as well as some other sessions that we thought you might be interested in. If you think we are missing some other important events, e-mail us back with details and we will post it on our website: www.global-campaign.org. To find out more about the entire Conference, go to <http://www.aids2004.org/>

Sunday, July 11

4:15pm Acting on Rights: Women, HIV/AIDS and the Barcelona Bill of Rights. Room F

Monday, July 12

12:00pm Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. *UNAIDS Meeting Room*

2:00pm Mobilizing women leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS: Critical questions for critical times. *Session Room K*

6:00pm Women and HIV/AIDS: It's Not as Simple as ABC *Room EC5*

Thursday, July 15

8:30am Plenary Session--Expanding options and access for prevention. *Session Room A*

10:30am Female initiated prevention technologies. *Session Room H*

2:00pm Microbicides, HIV treatment and vaccines (MTV): Crosstraining for Advocates – Megan Gottemoeller, Global Campaign. *EC Room 5*

Microbicides Meetings

- African Microbicides Advocacy Group Meeting (location and date to be announced on our website)
- Goal-setting Meeting for Asian Microbicides Advocates (location and date to be announced on our website)
- Global Strategic Meeting for Microbicides Advocates (location and date to be announced on our website)

Posters

- Involving gay men in microbicides advocacy. Abstract #MoPeE4074. Anna Forbes, Global Campaign for Microbicides and Will Nutland, Terrence Higgins Trust
- Title TBA, Megan Gottemoeller, Global Campaign for Microbicides
- Perspectives of policymakers on microbicides introduction in Bangkok and Tamil Nadu. Abstract #ThPeC7419. Ananthi Thambinayagam, Global Campaign for Microbicides

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.