



Global Campaign News – Issue #63 20 February 2006

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

In this issue:

New study on antiretrovirals as possible PREP in monkeys
Freedom Lube no longer available but other unproven products proliferate
National Press Club features Rep. Danny Davis and Dr. Helene Gayle
European AIDS Treatment Group endorses the Campaign
Southeast Asian organizations move forward with microbicide advocacy
India Development Trust highlights potential significance of microbicides
Newsflash about Microbicides 2006
European exhibit launches alongside EU Statement for an AIDS Free Generation

New study on antiretrovirals as possible PREP in monkeys

Global

New studies from the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provide promising results about the use of antiretroviral therapy as possible Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PREP) against HIV infection. A daily injection of Truvada – which contains Viread (tenofovir) and Emtriva (emtricitabine) – was found to protect monkeys from becoming infected by simian HIV (SHIV). The monkeys received this daily injection, and then were exposed to SHIV for 14 days. The six monkeys that received the injections did not acquire SHIV, while the nine others who did not receive any protective injections all developed the virus. “Study authors believe the findings may be the strongest animal data yet suggesting that potent antiretrovirals given before HIV exposure may prevent sexual HIV transmission,” the CDC said in a statement. The drug doses given to the monkeys were different from the regimen commonly given to HIV-positive people. Further studies will determine how the findings pertain to humans.

Full abstract title: 32LB. Prevention of Rectal SHIV Transmission in Macaques by Tenofovir/FTC Combination. J Garcia-Lerma, R Otten, S Qari, E Jackson, W Luo, M Monsour, R Schinazi, R Janssen, T Folks, and Walid Heneine. CDC, Atlanta, GA, US

This abstract and others are available from the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections website: <http://www.retroconference.org/2006/>

Freedom Lube no longer available but other unproven products proliferate

Global

As advocates for a tool that does not yet exist, the Global Campaign is deeply concerned with preventing unrealistic expectations. One of the more insidious ways in which such expectations are exploited is through the marketing of products publicly advertised as “microbicides” even though their safety and efficacy have not been proven.

To help prevent such exploitation, the Campaign maintains an Unproven Product Claims Watch to alert the public to such products and warn of the risks associated with using them. We also take steps to get such products off the market whenever possible.

Recently we’ve had a notable success in this area. In 2003, we published an article in *GC News* (issue #26, 8/19/03) about a product called *Freedom Lube* that was being sold on the internet. Its promoters claimed that “[u]sing

Freedom Lube greatly reduces the risk of contracting HIV”, adding that “[a]lthough many microbicidal lubricants are under development, Freedom Lube is the only one currently on the market”.

With the assistance of our partners at the National Women's Health Network, we brought this to the attention of the US Federal Trade Commission (FTC), which is responsible for regulating advertising of supplements and other "natural" products sold in the US. Then we had the very good fortune to link up with Paul Yde and Karine Faden from the Washington, D.C. office of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, an international law firm, and with Steve Stockum, an economist with Economists Inc. in Washington.

Mr. Yde and Dr. Stockum, both former FTC officials, kindly agreed to take on the issue on a pro bono basis for the Global Campaign and drafted the necessary papers to bring it to the attention of the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and pursue it with the FTC. As a result of this advocacy, the FDA issued a warning letter to *Freedom Lube*'s distributor and contacted the company that was processing the payments for Freedom Antiviral orders. That company immediately ceased operating with Freedom Antiviral. It is now impossible to complete orders on the Freedom Antiviral website, because there is no way for payment to be processed. We are very grateful to Mr. Yde, Ms. Faden and Dr. Stockum for this intervention and for their commitment to preventing this type of exploitation. Unfortunately, the promoters of *Freedom Lube* have yet to be apprehended and other unproven claims are popping up with increasing frequency.

Another product, *Green Sun*, was brought to our attention by a *GC News* reader. *Green Sun*, also promoted as the Natropractica *Herbal Condom* is being sold at <http://www.natropractica.com/herbalcondom.html>. We are in the process of determining whether a similar process can be applied to stop the sale of this product, given that it does not explicitly promise to prevent HIV (although it implies that claim very strongly).

Most alarming are three new products brought to our attention in the last few weeks that are being promoted as anti-HIV microbicides produced in China. The recent news attention to China's escalating HIV epidemic may have stimulated interest among those willing to prey upon people desperate for something that will enable them to protect themselves from infection.

A spray-on product called *Genvia* is being promoted as a 100% effective broad-spectrum microbicide so potent that “it is virtually impossible for sexually transmitted diseases to pass through *Genvia*'s liquid shield and live”. Its promoters also claim that it “has been approved by the Ministry of Health in People's Republic of China”. Colleagues at UNAIDS, contacted officials at the Chinese Ministry of Health at our request and verified that this is a false claim.

Other *GC News* readers alerted us to the promotion of *Splendo*, a product registered with the Chinese Ministry of Health as a mucous membrane disinfectant (a category that includes dental and pre-surgical disinfectants, among other things). The Chinese Ministry says that *Splendo* is an iodine solution registered for use in medical institutions, not households, and has been shown to have efficacy against only a few bacteria.

Interestingly, the website promoting *Splendo* as a microbicide states that *Splendo* prevents STIs (see <http://www.chinamicrobicides.com/malefemale.htm>) but stops just short of making an HIV claim. Again, however, that claim is strongly implied.

A third product in this category, spotted by readers in Spain and the US, is the *Liquid Condom*, also called the *Nanometer-silver Cryptomorphic Condom* (see http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2005-11/21/content_3812797.htm). It is also touted as being approved by “China's health and drugs administration” – a contention that the Chinese Ministry denies. Since the *Liquid Condom* is apparently being produced by a Sino-Canadian company called Blue Cross Biomedical, Ltd, we have contacted Health Canada and asked them if they can find out which Canadian company is participating in the manufacture of this product and what proof they have of its effectiveness.

Needless to say, this proliferation of unproven products is alarming. We are very grateful for the assistance of all of our allies and partners around the world who alert us to such claims when they occur, help us to gather accurate information about them and (where possible) take action warn potential users of their dangers and/or get them off the market.

As advocates, all of us share a responsibility to report and confront misleading or fraudulent claims related to microbicides so that consumers are not misled or encouraged to make unproven assumptions about existing products.

Please contact Anna Forbes, Global North Programs Coordinator, at asforbes@path-dc.org if you become aware of any other products designed for vaginal and/or rectal use that are currently being promoted as proven microbicides.

National Press Club features Rep. Danny Davis and Dr. Helene Gayle North America

On 8 February, Dr. Helene Gayle of the Gates Foundation and Representative Danny Davis from Chicago spoke passionately on microbicides and HIV prevention at a Newsmakers Event at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. The event, hosted by the Global Campaign for Microbicides, Alliance for Microbicide Development and CONRAD, was intended to draw the media's attention to the high rate of HIV/AIDS in the developing world and in the African American community in the U.S. and discuss the possibility for microbicides to blunt the epidemic.

Dr. Helene Gayle, Director of the Gates Foundation's HIV, TB and Reproductive Health program, touted microbicides as one of the most promising weapons in the battle to prevent new infections. She emphasized that it will take a "major investment" in early testing and in clinical trials enrolling tens of thousands of women – and that investment is needed urgently, as "women's lives hang in the balance."

Congressman Davis, a member of the Congressional Black Caucus and a lead sponsor of H.R. 3854, the U.S. Microbicide Development Act, discussed efforts in Congress to appropriate additional funding for microbicide development.

Journalists from a number of media outlets were present, including WAMU, Congressional Quarterly, Reuters, UPI, Media 24, Nature, Bloomberg and Accuracy in Reporting. The event has already generated some press coverage, but was also intended to provide background information for future articles. Visit <http://www.upi.com/HealthBusiness/view.php?StoryID=20060208-040408-8796r> to see a resulting article from United Press International.

European AIDS Treatment Group endorses the Campaign Europe

In a concrete demonstration of the increasing overlap between the treatment and prevention agendas, the European AIDS Treatment Group (EATG) has become the second NGO in Europe dedicated to treatment access to endorse the Global Campaign's goals (the first being the Spanish Grupo de trabajo sobre tratamientos por VIH).



Meijer, Beatrice Nabulya]

In a 3-day meeting held in December, EATG members from 16 countries joined representatives of the Campaign staff and partners for a dialogue and training on microbicides science, the ethics of trials and advocacy. Participants learned about microbicide trials and had an opportunity to network and interact across fields. When asked about the best part of the meeting, one person responded "that it happened," reflecting how rarely new prevention technologies and treatment activists engage despite the strong call for MTV (microbicides-treatment-vaccines) activism in Bangkok 2004. [Picture in left, four participants in the meeting, Lydia Zigomo, Thandi Haruperi, Arwa

The EATG is a pan-European network of individuals from civil society who advocate for better HIV/AIDS treatment access within Europe. The EATG convenes European Community Advisory Board (ECAB) meetings 4-6 times a year at which their members to discuss new advances in treatment and access issues with pharmaceutical companies. It is hoped that an ECAB on microbicides can take place in partnership with GC Europe in 2006 or 2007.

The news magazine of the EATG, *European AIDS Treatment News*, recently published an article written by GC Europe coordinator, Rebekah Webb, on the new UNAIDS Prevention Strategy and the rationale for treatment and prevention activists to join forces. To access the article visit:
<http://www.eatg.org/eatn/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=150&mode=thread&order=0&thold=0>

Southeast Asian organizations move forward with microbicide advocacy

Asia

In collaboration with the Global Campaign, the Asian Pacific Council of AIDS Services Organization (APCASO) held a meeting in Bangkok to define the next steps needed to advance Southeast Asian microbicide advocacy. Participants spent the two-day meeting analyzing results from a mapping exercise done in Thailand, Philippines and Malaysia on what microbicides advocacy could look like in the respective countries and the region. The exercise was conducted by APCASO, the Thailand Women & HIV/AIDS Task Force and Remedios AIDS Foundation (Philippines). The Malaysian AIDS Council also attended the meeting.

The mapping exercise revealed several important insights as to how the region's advocacy agenda should be shaped. Specifically, respondents expressed the need to:

- ?? Re-package microbicides as a general health product rather than something expressly for HIV, thereby reducing possible stigma.
- ?? Introduce microbicides to the general public and not just high to risk groups such as sex workers.
- ?? Include men in awareness-raising and education on microbicides.
- ?? Ensure the ethical conduct of clinical trials.
- ?? Ensure the accessibility of microbicides once available.

Meeting participants drafted next steps for country and regional activities to address key advocacy challenges. These included adaptation of GCM fact sheets for Asia, general awareness-raising and monitoring clinical trials in the region. Finally, participants discussed establishing a regional working group that could provide leadership and set the agenda for microbicides advocacy for the Southeast Asia region.

India Development Trust highlights potential significance of microbicides

Europe/Asia

To mark World AIDS Day 2005, the India Development Trust held a fundraising dinner in London on 1 December, highlighting the urgent need for increased action against the spread of HIV on the Indian sub-continent. The gala event opened with Bollywood dancing, but then took on a more serious note with a focus on the scale of the HIV epidemic and how microbicides could address HIV prevention gaps.

Among the speakers were Mr. Ranjan Mathai, Deputy High Commissioner for India; Andrew Landsley, Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Rebekah Webb, European Coordinator for the Global Campaign for Microbicides. Guests learned that India could be the "AIDS capital of Asia" by 2010 with as many as 25 million people living with HIV, and that India has the potential to create, test, license, manufacture and export the world's first safe and effective microbicide.

The India Development Trust was set up in 1993 with a mission to alleviate poverty and promote public-private partnerships to tackle development problems. Their new initiative, Savera, is designed to offer HIV prevention, treatment and support to rural communities, using mobile clinics. The project plans to draw on the skills and expertise of the Indian Diaspora in the UK to assist communities in India. More about the project can be found at the IDT website: <http://indiadevelopmenttrust.com/>.

Newsflash about Microbicides 2006

Africa

Microbicides 2006 will take place from 23 to 26 April in Cape Town, South Africa. You can learn more about the conference at www.microbicides2006.org. The following is a message from the conference organizers:

We have received an overwhelming response to the call for abstracts with a total of 572 abstracts received across the 4 tracks. All applicants will be notified by the end of February whether their abstracts have been accepted.

The Conference Co-Chairs are delighted to announce an exciting line-up of guest speakers, including renowned scientists, researchers, politicians, advocates and high profile figures. Scientific Sessions will be opened by the South African Minister of Health Dr Manto Tsabalala-Msimang on Monday 24 April, followed by an address by Dr Peter Piot Executive Director UNAIDS. Mrs Graca Machel, Justice Edwin Cameron of the South African High Court, and the South African Minister of Science and Technology Mr Mosibudu Mangena, will each deliver a keynote address at the Opening Ceremony on Sunday 23 April. Mrs Joy Phumlaphi Assistant Director-General Family and Community Health, WHO and Mr Zackie Achmat Chairperson, Treatment Action Campaign South Africa will address delegates at the Closing Ceremony on Wednesday 26 April. The conference also promises an exciting line-up of plenary and keynote speakers throughout the three days.

European exhibit launches alongside EU Statement for an AIDS Free Generation Europe

On the eve of World AIDS Day, British activists, politicians and Members of Parliament gathered at Somerset House in London to discuss “HIV Prevention: Promises, Progress and Reality”, with the Global Campaign’s photographic exhibit *Giving Women Power Over AIDS* in the spotlight for its debut on the European stage.

The evening reception followed a high-level meeting of the European Union’s development ministers and the release of an unprecedented EU statement on “HIV Prevention for an AIDS Free Generation”. In the Statement, member states committed to addressing the prevention gap, “which if left unchecked, will undermine the whole AIDS response” by, amongst other things, supporting “investment in the development of new biomedical prevention technologies including microbicides and vaccines”: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/eupresidency2005/EU-statement-dec2005.pdf>

In a series of speeches that reinforced the need for expanded action on HIV prevention in which microbicides is central, the British Development Minister, Hillary Benn, spoke passionately about his conviction that people should not have to die because they inject drugs or have sex. Simon Wright, head of the HIV/AIDS campaign at ActionAid, gave a compelling speech on the importance of balancing treatment and prevention efforts.

Other expert speakers included Prudence Mabele, founder and Executive Director of the Positive Women's Network in South Africa, Mannie Ncube of SPW in Tanzania and Lori Heise, Director of the Global Campaign for Microbicides. The event concluded with a civil society response to the EU Statement that emphasized the importance of prevention for positives, access to commodities, vulnerability and universal treatment. The statement is available at: <http://www.aidsconsortium.org.uk/protected/news/news%205/news10.htm>

The exhibit remained in London at City Hall during a gathering of 100 experts on HIV/AIDS organised by the trade union Amicus, Action for Southern Africa (ACTSA) and Interact Worldwide on 14th January.

The exhibit will tour other European capital cities in 2006. To receive more information about the travelling exhibit, please contact Arwa Meijer - ameijer@path.org.

As always, check out [upcoming events](#) featuring the Global Campaign’s travelling exhibit, *Giving Women Power Over AIDS* – now on tour in Canada, Europe and the United States: www.global-campaign.org/exhibit.htm

We welcome your input and contributions for future issues! Please send emails 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.