



## Global Campaign News – Issue #79 18 April 2007

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 other sexually transmitted infections. This and previous issues of *GC News* are available online at <http://www.global-campaign.org/gcarchives.htm>

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## **Research update**

### **Update: Adult Male Circumcision and HIV Prevention Global**

In the March 27, 2007 issue of *GC News*, we reported that, in light of the results of three clinical trials which demonstrated that male circumcision reduced the risk of infection of men through heterosexual sex by about 60 percent, the World Health Organization (WHO) was drafting guidance for large-scale circumcision projects in Africa and Asia. The very next day, the WHO officially promoted male circumcision as part of a comprehensive prevention package to prevent heterosexual transmission of HIV, in addition to voluntary counseling and testing, education in safe sex practices and the use of condoms, and treatment of sexually transmitted infections (STIs). In response, donor organizations like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), have agreed to provide money for circumcision projects in regions where the operation can be done safely, a considerable challenge for most resource-poor nations.

The WHO noted that additional research is still needed to explore such issues as (1) the impact of male circumcision on heterosexual transmission from HIV-infected men to women (particularly in light of the results of the now-suspended Rakai study), (2) the impact of male circumcision on transmission and acquisition of other STIs, and (3) the protective benefit of male circumcision for partners engaging in anal intercourse.

A large number of logistical, political and ethical issues still remain unanswered. For example, will some men more frequently engage in high-risk behaviors, erroneously believing that circumcision is completely protective? Can large-scale circumcision projects be conducted in a safe, ethical and culturally sensitive manner in resource-poor countries with a high incidence of HIV/AIDS? What safeguards are needed to further protect women? Should circumcision also be promoted for men at risk of acquiring HIV through other routes of infection, including men who have sex with men and injection-drug users? The Global Campaign along with our partners will continue to engage in discussions and seek out answers to these and other questions.

For more information, visit <http://www.global-campaign.org/malecircumcision.htm>.

## **Alliance for Microbicide Development meeting “maps” the field**

The 10<sup>th</sup> Alliance for Microbicide Development meeting, which took place in Washington DC from 20-21 March, undertook to “map” the microbicide field according to priority actions cited in the [Microbicide Development Strategy \(MDS\)](#). Those working in microbicide research, development, and advocacy described their activities within the framework of the MDS and identified any ongoing or planned projects that address priority actions. In addition, two panel discussions were held that addressed microbicide clinical trial issues: the first dealt with challenges faced by microbicide developers and small biotechnology companies, and the second focused on securing treatment for those who become HIV positive during a microbicide trial. The inaugural issue of *Mapping the Microbicide Effort*, which was conceptualized by the Microbicide Donors' Committee and supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, was released during the meeting.

The final section of the Mapping document reviews seven “areas of emphasis” for research and development in the field over the coming year:

1. Continued support for basic and pre-clinical research, with sharpened focus on key emerging questions
2. Increasing the number and diversity of microbicide candidates and rationalizing their advancement through the whole development pipeline
3. Organizing and sharing data on tools used to evaluate microbicide candidate safety and efficacy, and conceptualizing new approaches
4. Exploration of alternative approaches to designing microbicide clinical trials
5. Strategic evaluation and selection of tools used to measure participant adherence to trial procedures and product preferences
6. Strategically conceptualize, sequence, and support the use of existing clinical research sites and scale up additional site capacity correspondingly
7. Compile data for information exchange and foster forums for communication among developers working on manufacturing and formation of candidate microbicides, and around the challenges of commercialization and eventual access to microbicides.

All of the presentations from the meeting are available at: <http://www.microbicide.org/meetings/meeting10.shtml>  
Combined, these presentations provide an incredible snapshot of the microbicides field.

## **Microbicides Trials Network meeting highlights many cross-cutting issues**

### **Global**

The following week, the Microbicides Trials Network held their annual meeting in Washington DC from 26 to 29 March. The meeting provided an opportunity to review the scientific agendas and research priorities of the trial network and to exchange information among representatives of protocol teams, working groups and science committees. Plenary sessions covered a range of topics including: building bridges between prevention & treatment, engaging the community in microbicide research, how other prevention trials may impact microbicides, the need for parallel development of rectal microbicides, and key ethics issues in HIV prevention science. For more information about the Microbicides Trials Network, visit: <http://www.mtnstopshiv.org/>

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## **Advocacy in action**

### **Advocates rally around the U.S. Microbicide Development Act of 2007**

#### **North America**

We are pleased to announce that the Microbicide Development Act (MDA) of 2007 was introduced by strong bipartisan leadership in both the U.S. House and Senate in commemoration of International Women’s Day, 8 March.

“It is time to speak the truth and acknowledge the facts,” stated Senator Barack Obama, one of the lead sponsors of the MDA. “It’s women who are biologically and socially more susceptible to the HIV infection, in part as a consequence of biology, but mostly because of uneven power between the sexes around the world. It is a fact that marriage is no protection from HIV transmission for women.”

The Microbicide Development Act would establish a dedicated microbicide research and development branch at the National Institutes of Health and strengthen microbicide activity at the U.S. Agency for International Development and the Centers for Disease Control. “Passage of this bill will bring us closer to the goal of getting critical prevention tools into the hands of women,” stated Lori Heise, Director of the Global Campaign for Microbicides.

“This is not just an issue for women in developing countries,” notes Dazon Dixon Diallo, founder/CEO of SisterLove, Inc. “We need microbicides right here at home too, because many of the issues that place black women at risk are the same the world over. AIDS is the number one cause of death among African American women aged 25-34.”

Advocates across the U.S. are rallying to get 60 sponsors in the House and 25 sponsors in the Senate by Mother’s Day, 13 May. Please help us in these efforts, by writing, calling, or visiting your legislators! Learn more at our legislative resource centre at: <http://www.global-campaign.org/legislativeadvocacy.htm>

## UK Campaign goes on the road...

### Europe

*By Georgina Caswell, Policy & Community Engagement Officer, African HIV Policy Network.  
UK African Microbicides Working Group (of the UK Campaign for Microbicides)*

“What’s all the hype around microbicides?” was the recurrent question asked by HIV activists in Manchester, UK following the Toronto International AIDS Conference in August 2006. As a result, George House Trust, a leading HIV organisation in Manchester, collaborated with the UK African Microbicides Group (of the UK Campaign for Microbicides) to host a seminar on microbicides on 12 March 2007. The event is one of several activities taking place this year to bring the microbicides message to communities and activists beyond London.



Angelina Namiba and Georgina Caswell on the way home from the Manchester seminar

There were 58 participants at the seminar, most of whom were African women. A significant number were living with HIV and others were HIV activists. Active campaigner for microbicides, Angelina Namiba gave an introduction on microbicides and their development. This was followed by a presentation on the ethical issues surrounding trials by Lydia Zigomo of Interact Worldwide. Finally, Mary Lima of Terrence Higgins Trust provided participants with information about what it means to be an advocate and how participants can raise awareness about microbicides within their communities and engage in lobbying activities.

Several participants asked why there was a need for a *campaign*. Why do they simply not exist? Is it all about funding or is progress slow because microbicides are currently being designed for African women? Participants questioned how the field can increase pharmaceuticals’ investment in research and development of microbicides. Participants also expressed the need for rectal microbicides because anal intercourse is prevalent in all communities. Several participants posed questions about the effectiveness of microbicides: given that a microbicide is user-controlled, how do scientists know whether a microbicide is effective, or whether the effectiveness is due to other factors? Finally, participants highlighted the need for social research into the behaviour of men and their acceptability of these new products.

The UK African Microbicides Working Group will ensure that the questions, comments and concerns from the dynamic discussions at the seminar are fed into the ongoing work of the UK Campaign for Microbicides. George House Trust and the UK African Working Group will continue to work together to regularly update participants

about developments and to ensure that some advocates in northwest England are able to engage in future advocacy activities.

For more information about the seminar or about the UK African Working Group and its activities, please visit [www.ahpn.org/campaigns/index.php?camp\\_id=4](http://www.ahpn.org/campaigns/index.php?camp_id=4)

## **PATHWAY Act introduced in U.S. to strengthen international HIV prevention programs**

### **North America**

On 27 March, U.S. Congresswoman Lee (D-CA) and Congressman Shays (R-CT) re-introduced the Protection Against Transmission of HIV for Women and Youth Act (PATHWAY Act).

This bill, H.R. 1713, is critical to ensure that U.S. funding for international HIV prevention programs work for women and youth. It would remove the requirement that the U.S. spend 1/3 of its international HIV prevention funding on abstinence-until-marriage programs (the "abstinence earmark") and it would require the President to develop a strategy to address the specific prevention needs of women and girls.

To ask your representative to sign on to the PATHWAY Act or to add your organization to the growing list of endorsers, visit: <http://www.pepfarwatch.org/pathway/>

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## ***Introducing the advocates...***

In an effort to introduce advocates to each other around the world, the editors of GC News are launching a new feature in every edition. "Introducing the advocates" will profile the activities of individual or a group advocating for new prevention technologies. The profiles may also suggest ways in which advocates around the world can help their efforts. To be considered for a profile in future issues, send a short note to [info@global-campaign.org](mailto:info@global-campaign.org)

## **The UK African Working Group on Microbicides**

### **Europe / Africa**

*By Angelina Namiba & Georgina Caswell, UK African Microbicides Working Group*

The UK African Microbicides Working Group is one of two working groups set up by the UK Campaign for Microbicides in 2005 to carry out the activities of the Campaign. Currently membership consists of 13 African women and 2 men, and we meet on a quarterly basis. Our members are engaged in HIV work in different ways – as HIV treatment activists, health promotion specialists, policy officers and managers of UK-based NGOs. All members of the Working Group actively advocate for the existence of microbicides and for their development in the most ethical way possible. Some of our members have been advocates since the first European microbicides conference in Antwerp in 2002, while others have joined more recently.

The Working Group has focused on raising awareness of microbicides amongst African communities in the UK – and has been particularly successful in engaging the regions beyond London. With the technical and financial support of the Global Campaign secretariat in Brussels, we held an Information Day in March 2006, which was followed up by a 'Train the Trainers' workshop in August 2006. These activities equipped us with the skills and confidence to respond to challenging questions about microbicides, particularly on the ethics of the trials.

In celebration of International Women's Day this year, we held a seminar in Manchester in collaboration with George House Trust, a leading HIV organisation in the Northwest of England – as reported in this edition of GC News. The Working Group ensures that questions and concerns from our seminars inform the direction of the UK Campaign for Microbicides.

Individually, members of the Working Group raise awareness during workshops, training courses and at World AIDS Day events. Angelina Namiba presents on microbicides at workshops at Positively Women and has held regional screenings of the film 'In Women's Hands'; Toju Cline-Cole recently delivered a presentation at the 'Love Safely' training in London targeting health promotion specialists that work with African communities; and other members of the Working Group introduce microbicides at African HIV Forum meetings. We also make sure we are present at conferences and other events where we can inform and lobby MPs and policymakers for their support.

Members of the Working Group meet regularly to debate issues, update ourselves on the latest developments and engage in advocacy activities. We are very passionate about getting microbicides into the hands of women (and men!) and we are keen to explore different ways of advocating for microbicides.

In addition to expanding our advocacy base and continuing our lobbying activities, the Working Group plans to skill up some members of the Working Group to become more literate in the scientific issues surrounding microbicides. We also plan to reach out to other groups, including women's organisations and student groups in the UK. Furthermore, in the coming year, we would like to link up with some of the voices in Africa to help us develop our messaging about microbicides.

The biggest challenge we face is delivering the message on the 'ethics' of the trials to African communities and overcoming the misperceptions. In order to address this, we would really like to link up with a community advisory board (CAB) or a particular advocacy group in Africa to share experiences of discussing the ethical issues and to make sure that our messages accurately reflect the interests of participants in the trials.

The Working Group is administered by the African HIV Policy Network on behalf of the UK Campaign for Microbicides, a coalition of 13 NGOs hosted by Interact Worldwide.

If you are part of an African CAB or advocacy group and want to collaborate with the UK African Working Group on Microbicides, please email [anamiba@positivelywomen.org.uk](mailto:anamiba@positivelywomen.org.uk) or [georgina.caswell@ahpn.org](mailto:georgina.caswell@ahpn.org)

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## **Resources**

### **“Choice Is Empowering...”**

#### **New Article by Erica Gollub in International Family Planning Perspectives**

In her insightful 4 page article featured in the December 2006 issue of International Family Planning Perspectives, Erica Gollub asserts:

“We have seen the credibility of the male condom damaged over the past several years by disinformation campaigns, and the language of reproductive rights twisted to disempower women. Precious resources that could have been used for prevention are now being wasted in countering these attacks. Future HIV prevention efforts should focus on the potential for a given method, program or policy to increase a woman's ability to control her reproductive health, rather than on product efficacy values that apply to a narrow set of users under highly manipulated conditions.”

Read the full article at: <http://www.guttmacher.org/pubs/journals/3220906.html>

### **GCM Resource Highlight: New and Improved Global Campaign website!**

We are very pleased to announce the “new and improved” Global Campaign for Microbicides website. The new site maintains the same central features as the old, including:

- Introductions to the Global Campaign, microbicides, and other prevention technologies
- Information on regional activities, trial ethics, and community involvement
- The latest media coverage, issues of GC News, events, and ways to get involved, and

- The most popular Download Centres in English, U.S./Canadian English, French, Spanish, and Russian.

Please also check out our new Spanish and French websites – available by clicking on *en español* and *en français* at the bottom of any page.

We hope that you will find the new site refreshing, easy to navigate, and helpful as you conduct your work. As always, please let us know if there are any additional resources that we can highlight on the site.

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