



## Global Campaign News – Issue #88 21 November 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**

### **VivaGel and Durex Condoms: Advocates Respond**

#### **Global**

On 16 October 2007, StarPharma (Australia-based developers of the candidate microbicide, VivaGel) and SSL International (UK based producers of Durex condoms) announced that they had signed a deal to develop condoms coated with VivaGel.

With about 30 percent of the global market for branded condoms, SSL drew the attention of microbicide advocates in 2003 when they became the first (and, to date, only) major condom manufacturer to voluntarily discontinue production of condoms coated with Nonoxynol-9. N-9 is a contraceptive compound that was added to condoms in the 1980s when laboratory studies demonstrated that it kills HIV as well as sperm. In 2000-2001, however, it was shown to be ineffective for HIV prevention and especially irritating to rectal tissue. Shortly thereafter, the Global Campaign in collaboration with other groups called for its removal from condoms and lubricants (products that can be used rectally) and was gratified that Durex responded positively to this call.

According to StarPharma CEO Dr. Jackie Fairley, the SSL agreement is the second of two unrelated condom coating agreements signed by Starpharma in the last three months. VivaGel is a candidate microbicide currently under development as a potential microbicide to reduce risk of HIV and HSV (herpes). It is currently in Phase 1 safety trials in Puerto Rico, Kenya and U.S.(San Francisco).

While the Global Campaign welcomes the possibility of a product that could be applied to condoms to enhance their effectiveness, it joined with the International Rectal Microbicide Working Group (IRMWG)

in sending a letter to both StarPharma and SSL on October 26 to ask when and how the rectal safety of VivaGel would be assured before it is used as a condom-coating product.

The letter, signed by Global Campaign Director Lori Heise and IRMWG Director Jim Pickett, specifically asks what other safety trials will be conducted in addition to the vaginal safety trials currently underway and whether/when rectal safety trials will be conducted. It goes on to note that these questions are prompted by the field's experience with N-9 and the critical importance of refraining from using any product as a condom coating before it has not conclusively proven to be safe for regular exposure to both rectal and vaginal membranes.

The letter is posted at [www.IRMWG.org](http://www.IRMWG.org) and we will keep you apprised of developments as they unfold.

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## **Advocacy in action**

### **Registration now open for the M2008 Pre-Conference Workshop! India**

The African Microbicides Advocacy Group, the Global Campaign for Microbicides the Indian Network of NGO's, the National Coalition on Health Initiative and the Positive Women's Network invite you to attend the *Microbicides 2008 (M2008) Pre-Conference Workshop* on 24 February 2008, preceding the formal opening of the Microbicides 2008 Conference in New Delhi, India

The M2008 Pre-Conference Workshop will serve as an introduction to some key topics in the microbicide field, allow for discussion between and among community advocates and researchers and prepare participants to fully engage in the discussions that will take place at the Microbicides 2008 Conference. The pre-conference workshop will also provide the opportunity for those new to the microbicides field to learn and/or review some of the microbicide basics in our Microbicides 101 break-out session.

Registration for the M2008 Pre-Conference Workshop will close on 31 December 2007 or until capacity is reached. Space is limited so we encourage you to apply early. There is no registration fee for this workshop. To register, please complete the registration form (<http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/M2008-PC-Registration.pdf>) and email to [kwest@path.org](mailto:kwest@path.org) or +1-202-457-1466, attention M2008 Pre-Conference Registration.

Separate scholarships are not available for participation in the M2008 Pre-Conference Workshop. However, if you have received a scholarship from the conference organizers to attend the Microbicides 2008 Conference, your travel can be arranged by the conference in order to allow you to attend the M2008 Pre-Conference Workshop.

To read more about the Global Campaign's activities at the M2008 Conference, please continue to check our M2008 webpage (at <http://www.global-campaign.org/M2008.htm>).

### **Advocates Join Forces to Highlight New HIV Prevention Options at Global Conference on Maternal Health Europe**

From 18-20 October over 1800 politicians, human rights activists, NGOs, faith groups, health professionals and economists gathered in London to mark the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Safe Motherhood

Initiative. The landmark conference, *Women Deliver*, drew international attention to the shocking numbers of women who continue to die needlessly in childbirth, calling on world leaders to make women's health a priority.

In a joint interactive session, the Global Campaign teamed up with the Center for Health and Gender Equity, Ibis Reproductive Health and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative to highlight strategies for mobilising political will and financial resources, to ensure that women and girls have access to a variety of prevention methods that meet their varied needs and preferences.

Representing GCM, Georgina Caswell, Policy and Community Engagement Officer at the African HIV Policy Network (pictured), spoke about the importance of expanding women's choices and collaborative efforts to engage women and vulnerable groups in dialogue with microbicide scientists. She was joined by Busisiwe Nkala, Project Site Director for the MIRA diaphragm trial in South Africa who shared her experiences in counselling young people on sexual health and HIV issues. A lively discussion ensued on the challenges of implementing the female condom and the importance of maintaining these efforts. The session concluded with acknowledgement that key lessons learned from the development of female condoms will be vital to the successful introduction of microbicides, vaccines and cervical barriers.



## Report Back: U.S. Advocate Trainings

### North America

This month, dozens of advocates from across the U.S. participated in training sessions to become more proficient in their microbicides work.



The American Medical Students Association (AMSA) held a national *Microbicides Leadership Institute* for a dozen participants, who will go back to their schools and communities to raise awareness and advocate for microbicides. The Junior League of Los Angeles held a training session for existing coalition members and for participants from several Los Angeles agencies that have not yet been engaged in microbicides, in an effort to expand their reach. The Northwest Microbicides Coalition in Seattle held a speakers bureau training for existing and new coalition members.

GCM provided part of the training at each event. Other speakers at some of the events included: the AIDS Research Alliance, amfAR, AMSA, ReProtect, and UCLA.

We warmly welcome these newly trained and enthusiastic microbicides advocates.

## Advocates' Consultation on HIV Prevention Trials: The Carraguard and VOICES Studies

### Africa

On 18-19 October, the Microbicides Trials Network (MTN) and the Population Council sponsored a meeting to update African HIV prevention and treatment advocates on their latest clinical research activities, as well as gain a better understanding of advocates' concerns. The meeting, "Advocates' Consultation on HIV Prevention Trials: The Carraguard™ and VOICES Studies" was convened with the

African Microbicides Advocacy Group (AMAG), African Rights and Alliance for Southern Africa (ARASA), AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC) and the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM).

The first day of the consultation provided a space for advocates to review the status of microbicides and PrEP trial research internationally and discuss issues in prevention trials from an advocate's perspective. Sydney West, Global South Coordinator for GCM; Gregg Gonsalves, Treatment Literacy and Advocacy Programme Coordinator for ARASA; and Anna Forbes, Deputy Director for GCM presented on microbicides, PrEP, and prevention advocacy issues respectively. Many of the questions that the advocates – who represented civil society organizations from Malawi, Uganda, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe – wanted answers to centered around how advocates could better assist clinical trial researchers' in their work. Advocates imagined they could play a role in many areas, including helping to speed up regulatory approvals, improving efforts to disseminate information about the conduct and results of trials to trial participants and local communities, and securing funding for the field and prevention advocacy.

The second day, the trial sponsors joined the advocates. Cecilia Mhiti, from Southern Africa HIV and AIDS Information Dissemination Service (SAFAIDS), opened the meeting by reading a list questions to which advocates were seeking answers.

The Population Council, a US-based NGO presented the rationale, study design and implementation of their Phase III Carraguard™ trial, the results of which are expected in early 2008. If the trial results show a Carraguard™ to be a partially effective microbicide, messages around use will be complicated. The group discussed the role of the civil society groups in aiding results dissemination.

Later in the day, staff from the Microbicides Trials Network presented their upcoming study, Vaginal and Oral Interventions to Control the Epidemic (VOICES) and asked for feedback on their draft protocol.

Because the VOICES study will be testing both oral and vaginal applications of the anti-retroviral drug tenofovir as an HIV intervention, there was a lot of discussion on the issue of resistance and concern over the numbers of women who might acquire resistance while taking part in the study. John Mellors, Director of Virology for the MTN, responded to many of the concerns and emphasized that we must keep in mind the potential public health benefits of such a study.

The meeting concluded with many participants stressing the need for more extensive trainings that would cover issues such as, introduction to clinical trials, scientific research literacy, how to read and understand protocols, and more on the regulatory issues.

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## **Highlighted Resources**

### **Lessons for Microbicide Introduction: A new report**

In an attempt to garner a body of evidence-based experience for the microbicide field, the Population Council held a *Day of Dialogue* meeting to share insights and knowledge gained from a range of product introduction efforts. A new report summarizing the discussion and lessons learned, can be downloaded from their website.

*Day of Dialogue, Insights and Evidence from Product Introduction: Lessons for Microbicides*  
Available for download at: <http://www.popcouncil.org/pdfs/DoDMicrobicides.pdf>



### **Plans for World AIDS Day 2007?**

[Click here](#) to find out the Global Campaign growing body of resources and materials to support your education and advocacy efforts.

### **New Global Campaign Materials in Spanish!**

There is a wide range of newly translated Spanish-language education and advocacy materials available from the Global Campaign for Microbicides. Here are just a few:

**Folleto de información básica para difusión amplia** (The Spanish low literacy brochure)  
(<http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/SPGCM-low-lit-brochure-2007Elow-res.pdf>)

**Inversión Europea en I&D en Microbidas** (European Investment Tracking)  
([http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/FS15Investment-tracking\\_SP\\_EU07.doc](http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/FS15Investment-tracking_SP_EU07.doc))

**Qué hacen las Coaliciones en Norteamérica** (What do U.S. Coalitions do?)  
([http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/GCM8-WhatCoalitionsDo\\_SP\\_Oct07.pdf](http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/GCM8-WhatCoalitionsDo_SP_Oct07.pdf))

**Letra de Ejemplo para el congreso de los Estados Unidos** (Sample letter to the U.S. Congress)  
([http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/Inst17-SampleLetter\\_ES\\_9March07.doc](http://www.global-campaign.org/clientfiles/Inst17-SampleLetter_ES_9March07.doc))

Also, remember that the Global Campaign's documentary film, *In Women's Hands*, and accompanying discussion guide are also available in Spanish. To learn more and order the film, please visit <http://www.global-campaign.org/film.htm>.

Is your constituency in need of other Spanish-language materials that are not yet available? If so, please contact Arwa Meijer at [ameijer@path.org](mailto:ameijer@path.org).

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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).  
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