



Global Campaign News June 24, 2002

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.

We welcome your input and contributions. 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.

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Research News: Participating in a Clinical Trial Helps Reduce Risk of HIV

An interesting finding from an STD prevention trial in Nairobi, Kenya, hit news services this week. Researchers testing STD prophylaxis among female sex workers in Kibera observed that risk behavior, along with HIV incidence, decreased over the course of the trial. Furthermore, they show that this behavior shift was associated with the HIV prevention services that trial participants received. In HIV prevention trials, including those for microbicides, all participants are given free condoms, treatment for other STDs, and risk reduction counseling. This is standard practice for ethical clinical trials, regardless of whether the individual is receiving the actual microbicide or the placebo, a product designed to seem identical to the microbicide but that does not contain the active ingredient. Participants in the Kenyan trial decreased their average number of sex partners, from around 16 to 5 per week. Self-reported consistent condom use also went up dramatically, from 17% at the beginning of the trial to 57.7% at follow-up. In addition, the researchers observed an overall reduction in STDs and lower than expected HIV incidence. The Kenyan findings suggest that by incorporating good, culturally appropriate risk-reduction counseling and services, ALL participants in a clinical trial can receive some immediate benefit.

This report by Rupert Kaul, et al, was published in the *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*, 30:69-72. 2002.

Excerpt from World's AIDS Crisis Worsening, Report Says Disease Spreading Fast in Sub-Saharan Africa. *(By John Donnelly, Globe Staff, June 16, 2002)*

The AIDS pandemic will rapidly worsen, with the number of cases possibly doubling in sub-Saharan Africa in five years, according to an analysis by US intelligence officials. The conclusion by analysts at the National Intelligence Council, an arm of the Central Intelligence Agency that studies issues of long-term strategic interest to the US government, is largely based on worrisome figures in Nigeria and Ethiopia, which together account for nearly a third of the people in sub-Saharan Africa. Both countries, with a combined population of nearly 200 million, have surpassed 5 percent infection rates among adults, a tipping point in several other African countries after which the rate of prevalence soared into double digits.

The analysts are particularly concerned about possible sharp increases in HIV and AIDS in India, the second most populous nation in the world. India has a large percentage of its population who are deprived of education and a political leadership that hasn't adequately begun to destigmatize the disease, the analysts said. That same mix of factors was deadly in the first wave of the crisis in Africa. India already has an estimated 3 million people infected with HIV or AIDS.

Globally, about 40 million people are infected with HIV or AIDS, which already is the deadliest disease in human history. About 23 million people have died from the disease - far more than even Europe's Black Death in the 14th century, according to medieval scholars.

In Africa, roughly 23 million people were infected with the disease in 1997, according to UNAIDS, the joint United Nations program for HIV/AIDS. The figure is 30 million now, a 30 percent increase over the previous five-year period. A doubling of cases in Africa in the next five years would push the number of people infected there to 60 million by 2007, analysts from the National Intelligence Council said.

The new projections almost surely will be given considerable weight among leading global health officials because the National Intelligence Council has a strong track record in forecasting trends about HIV and AIDS. The council was the lone voice in the US government a decade ago that called attention to the disease. In 1991, it predicted 45 million infections by the year 2000.

In April David F. Gordon from the National Intelligence Council also addressed a second wave of the AIDS pandemic, particularly in India, China, and Russia. China has an estimated 1 million cases, which UNAIDS said could grow to 20 million by 2020.

Ugandan Advocates meet in Kampala; Minister of Gender guest of honor

The Society of Women Against AIDS in Africa (SWAA) Uganda chapter and the Global Campaign for Microbicides convened an advocates' meeting on June 8 in Kampala. Thirty representatives from organizations working on health, women's rights, and

HIV/AIDS issues attended. The day-long workshop covered new information about women-focused HIV prevention methods and brought up a lively discussion about women's and men's sexuality and practices in Uganda. Minister of Gender, Labour, and Social Development, Hon. Bakoko Bakoru, addressed the meeting, encouraging the groups present to become active in advocating for female condoms and microbicides. "Here in Uganda, we have succeeded in altering the course of the HIV epidemic. We have set an example for other countries of the world to follow. In our role as leaders dealing with HIV and AIDS, let us raise our voices in demand of HIV prevention methods for women," the Minister said.

At the end of the meeting, each representative present described how their organization or agency could contribute to advocacy for more prevention methods. For example, TASO, the AIDS Service Organization, already does community education and outreach on prevention issues and vaccine trials, and could add information about female condoms and microbicides to their messages. The National Women's Council can mobilize networks in many different areas of development, and could highlight HIV and prevention for women. The Uganda Media Women's Association, which helps journalists to focus on women's issues, can also contribute to awareness-raising. In order to develop a cohesive strategy, the group decided to form a steering committee, which will continue to build up advocacy efforts in Uganda.

Thanks to everyone who participated in this meeting, and to SWAA Uganda for organizing it, especially Mary Byangire, Margaret Muganwa, Juliet Nassuna, Jane Nabalonzi and Francis Boogere.

Microbicides in Context: Fourth National Harm Reduction Conference

The Global Campaign for Microbicides is co-sponsoring the upcoming Fourth National Harm Reduction Conference: Taking Drug Users Seriously. We hope that many of you will consider attending this groundbreaking conference which will be held in Seattle, Washington from December 1-4th, 2002. Please note especially that the deadline for conference scholarship applications is July 1. For applications and more conference information, please see <http://harmreduction.org/conference/4thnatlconf.html>.

The Global Campaign is co-sponsoring this conference because microbicides, like syringe exchange, are methods of harm reduction. The first generation microbicide is expected to be about 50% - 60% effective -- enabling users to substantially reduce, but not eliminate, their risk of infection during sex. We will need to present them as a risk reduction option, less effective than condoms but certainly safer than nothing. The harm reduction movement has paved the way for exactly this approach by proving the tremendous value of offering people methods of reducing the health risks they live with when eliminating the risks altogether isn't possible.

Historically, this approach runs counter to the "all or nothing" framework of HIV/AIDS prevention. Calling for virtual risk elimination through sexual abstinence, 100% consistent condom use and abstinence from drug use -- the traditional messages set

standards that are unachievable for many people. The harm reduction movement's response, targeted to drug users, envisions a hierarchy of safety that includes cleaning user syringes and obtaining sterile syringes as incremental steps toward safety for people engaging in injection drug use. It values the lives of drug users and encourages them to act in self-protective ways within the context of their real lives.

As microbicide activists, we apply this same paradigm to sexual behaviors. Our messages must encourage people to use microbicides if they are going to have sex without a condom -- without discouraging them from insisting on condoms whenever possible. The harm reduction approach works because it supports people in increasing their level of safety to the greatest extent possible without demonizing them for choosing risk reduction rather than risk elimination.

Advocates in Action

African Journalists Get Coverage for Microbicides

Three journalists who attended Microbicides 2002 and the Global Campaign pre-conference workshop in Antwerp went home and wrote full page articles on microbicides for their local newspapers. Congratulations to Nancy Mburu whose story appeared in East African Standard, Jenifer Bakyawa who got two stories in The Monitor, Uganda and Paul Odotu whose story in the Daily Nation, Kenya can also be read at

<http://www.nationaudio.com/News/DailyNation/Supplements/horizon/>

Good work!

What's New at www.global-campaign.org

You can now click on the Microbicides 2002 conference icon at the bottom of the home page to see pictures taken at Microbicides 2002. You can also download copies of the powerpoint presentations that were presented at our pre-conference event: "Microbicides: Overview of HIV Prevention's New Hope."