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Carraguard trial participants' preferences for a dual protection microbicide gel

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OBJECTIVES

To gauge women's preferences for a microbicide to prevent both disease and pregnancy, or disease only.

METHODS

Two Phase 2 trials of Carraguard were conducted in Thailand and South Africa (1999-2002). HIV-negative women, 18 or older used Carraguard (or methylcellulose placebo) ≥ 3 times per week for 6-12 months. Face-to-face exit interviews included questions about dual protection.

RESULTS

539 women (n=157, Thailand; n=382, South Africa) completed a closing interview. Participants averaged 31.5 years of age in Thailand and 27.5 in South Africa. Most participants (65% Thailand, 70% South Africa) used hormonal contraception, and the minority was nulliparous (5% Thailand, 31% of South Africa). Most participants (72% Thailand, 63% South Africa) reported being more willing to use a dual protection microbicide than one for disease prevention only. 68.2% of Thai participants thought their partners would prefer a dual protection microbicide, whereas in South Africa, 50.8% of participants said their partners would prefer dual protection and 49.2% said disease prevention only. Most (72.6%) Thai participants said both types of microbicides are needed by women in their communities; responses among South African participants varied as to which type of microbicide is most needed; 39.1% said both types, 37.5% said dual protection, and 19.5% said disease prevention only.

CONCLUSION

These data indicate that women in disparate settings prefer a dual protection microbicide. In places like South Africa, where women have children at an older age and where there is a generalized HIV epidemic, a non-contraceptive microbicide could fill an important niche.