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User Perspectives on Vaginal Microbicides for Prevention of Pregnancy and HIV

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OBJECTIVES

Research on user perspectives of vaginal microbicides has taken place largely within the context of clinical trials, in the African countries where need is likely to be greatest. Although clinical trials generally require women to be using effective contraceptive methods, interest in vaginal microbicides for the dual protection of HIV and pregnancy has become evident. This paper presents data on the perspectives of clinical trial participants and their partners, as well as the community stakeholders (including health professionals) who will likely advise on use of future multiple prevention products.

METHODS

The HPTN 035A study was conducted in Lilongwe and Harare, as ancillary to the HPTN035 clinical trial. Qualitative data collection methods included focus groups, individual and small-group interviews and participant observation.

RESULTS

Trial participants and community stakeholders were more likely than male partners to express interest in a vaginal product for dual protection. For some, it is possible that use of a microbicide for contraceptive purposes will serve as a “cover” for use as an HIV prevention product. For others, convenience of a single method for dual or multiple purposes is the main factor motivating interest.

CONCLUSION

Although women, men and community stakeholders generally would prefer to have a choice of HIV prevention products that are and are not contraceptives, they clearly want information on the likely contraceptive effects of a vaginal microbicide.