

PD8 Evaluation of activities to achieve good community awareness of and participation in microbicide studies in SW Uganda

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ABSTRACT TEXT

Background:

Achieving a high degree of understanding of activities and a supportive attitude in the community should be an important part of any community-based HIV/AIDS intervention study. In collaboration with Microbicides Development Programme, we conducted a vaginal microbicide feasibility study between October 2002 and April 2004 in preparation of an efficacy trial. Activities included an HIV sero-survey; educational seminars about the feasibility study and efficacy trial; community, couple and individual consultative meetings; HIV Voluntary Counselling and Testing (VCT) services. A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) was formed to strengthen community-study team links. We assessed the level and quality of information achieved in order to inform the design of the efficacy trial.

Methods:

90 men and 90 women and 10 CLC members were equally but randomly selected from the five study communities; Face-to-face interviews using a semi-structured questionnaire were conducted within two months of end of study to assess the knowledge of programme activities, understanding and retention of key study messages, willingness to participate in future microbicides studies, perceived appropriateness of information dissemination channels and suggestions for improved community involvement.

Results:

All respondents were aware of education seminars, 97% of the sero-survey, 68% and 55% of the availability of VCT and venereal disease services, respectively. Most (68%) understood that these activities were in preparation for a microbicide efficacy trial. Roles of CLC were understood by 70%. Recall of key study messages was: microbicide gel was a safe trial product (87%); gel is to be inserted by women intra-vaginally before sex (75%). Least recalled was the need for correct and consistent condom use (40%). Reported appropriateness of channels of information dissemination was; consultative meetings (75%) video shows (64%), CLC (56%) and information sheets (33%). Willingness to participate in microbicides studies was 64% (men) and 67% (women). Unwillingness was related to partner refusal (mostly the male), lack of time, fear of side effects and stigmatization. Suggestions to enhance participation included age-gender based sessions and peer education.

Conclusion:

Study activities and messages were well recalled. Male involvement and peer education seem to be suitable for enhancing participation and community involvement in the planned trial.

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