

# **AB14 HSV2 Prevalence Amongst Women Participating in HIV Prevention Studies in rural communities in Durban, South Africa -Urgent need for Microbicide Product to be Active Against HSV2**

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## **ABSTRACT TEXT**

### **Background:**

The incidence of genital herpes is increasing worldwide and HSV2 is the most common cause of genital ulcerations among STIs. Many studies worldwide have reported an association between HIV infection and HSV2. HSV2 has been shown to increase HIV acquisition and transmission. Women were recruited from 2 HIV prevention studies, the MIRA trial, an ongoing Phase III trial examining the effectiveness of the diaphragm and Replens gel in preventing HIV acquisition, and the MDP feasibility study conducted in preparation of MDP Phase III trial. The study was conducted between September 2002 and September 2003.

### **Method:**

4910 women, aged between 18 and 49 years were screened for both trials. 1221 women from the MDP feasibility study and 3689 from the MIRA trial were screened at all the sites. 92% (n=3404) of women participating in the MIRA trial underwent HSV2 testing at screening and 41% (n=1515) at enrolment visits whereas only 35% (n=422) women screened for the feasibility study were tested for HSV2. Testing for HSV2 was done using the Focus HSV-2 ELISA IgG test. Women were also tested for HIV at screening using on site rapid tests. The HIV prevalence among women was 40% and 46.5% for the MIRA and MDP studies respectively. HIV seroconversion status was assessed for women participating in the MDP study.

### **Results:**

HSV2 prevalence was high among women screened for both trials, 77% for the MIRA trial and 85% for the feasibility study. 41% of participants were co-infected with HSV2 and HIV. 95% of HIV positive women and 65% of HIV negative women were infected with HSV2 at screening respectively. 66% of the 1515 women enrolled for the MIRA trial were infected with HSV2 at the time of enrollment and 2.8% of HIV seroconvertors for the MDP feasibility study were HSV2 positive at screening.

### **Conclusion:**

Clinical trials for HIV prevention among women need to consider the high prevalence of HSV2 among potential participants and the risk factors associated with it. Microbicide products need to be active against HSV2 to avoid confounding effects of HSV2 in determining its efficacy.

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