

# **PC28 Acceptability and adherence to microbicide gel use instructions among couples participating in a pilot study for a phase III microbicide trial in rural SW Uganda**

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## **ABSTRACT TEXT**

### **Introduction:**

As part of the international Microbicides Development Programme (MDP) and in preparation of efficacy trial, a pilot study using an intra-vaginally applied placebo gel was conducted in rural SW Uganda to assess the acceptability of and adherence to gel use instructions.

### **Methods:**

A total of 60 (50 HIV discordant M+ F-, 10 concordant negative) consenting couples were identified through serological screening and recruited to use an inert placebo gel intra-vaginally for 4 weeks. Couples received HIV voluntary counseling and testing. Condom provision and their use strongly encouraged. Women were requested to insert the full content of one gel applicator intra-vaginally within one-hour before every sex act and not to clean inside the vagina until one-hour afterwards. First gel insertion was performed under supervision at the clinic. Data about gel acceptability and gel use instructions were collected using face-to-face questionnaires at 4 weeks.

### **Results:**

Women reported 226 sex acts within the previous week before the interview. Gel use was reported for 93% of these. In 84% of the sex acts, both condom and gel use were reported, in 3% condom use only, in 9% gel use only and in 4% neither gel nor condoms. Of the 60 women 50 (83%) reported to have inserted gel within one-hour while 10 (17%) could not recall the timing. About 24 (40%) reported to have cleaned the vagina before one-hour after sex. Overall 51 (85%) women reported to have used the gel before every sex act. Reasons for not using gel included: refusal by partner, unavailability of gel and dislike of used applicators. Generally, ease and convenience to use gel, and increased vaginal lubrication were reported as advantages. Overall, 58 (96%) women and (49/55) 90% male partners reported that they liked to use the gel and would use it for longer than one year.

### **Conclusions:**

Despite intensive counselling on high risk of HIV transmission and active condom promotion, at least 8 (13%) of couples did not always use condoms. Gel acceptability and adherence in the pilot study was reportedly high. However, an attempt should be made to improve this further during the main trial.

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