

PC61 The Acceptability of a placebo gel in preparation for the Microbicides Development Programme Phase III Trial in Durban, South Africa

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ABSTRACT TEXT

Introduction:

Acceptability of vaginal microbicides is the key to its use and efficacy. Prior to initiating the MDP301 Phase III clinical trial, a short pilot study was conducted using a placebo gel to optimise trial procedures, and to assess acceptability of the gel among trial participants.

Objective:

To determine acceptability of a placebo gel among women enrolled into the MDP301 Pilot study.

Method:

A total of 99 women were screened between 6 October 2004 and 1 November 2004, of these 50 were enrolled and followed up for one month of gel use. In-depth interviews were conducted with all women, four weeks post enrolment. Acceptability data was collected using case-record forms, coital diaries and in-depth interviews. In-depth interviews were used to capture descriptive data and verify responses recorded in the coital diaries and case record forms.

Results:

Of the 50 women, 98% had one sexual partner and were in long-term relationships. 82% of women informed their partners about their gel use. 76% of these women reported that their partners were supportive. 94% of women found the gel to be acceptable because it was easy and convenient to use and enhanced sexual pleasure. 72% of women reported reduction in sexual discomfort during sex due to increased lubrication. 28% of women did not like the gel due to increased lubrication during sex and their partner's preference for drier sex. Pre-filled applicators, easy to follow gel instructions and inserting positions contributed to women's acceptability of the gel and applicator. 56% of women reported always using gel and condoms together. 14% of women never used condoms and gel together because of partner opposition. 15% of women forgot to carry the gel or condoms when visiting partners. Other reasons for lack of adherence to gel and condom use for every sex act were that women and their partners wanted to feel the gel; women ran out of gel and the gel reduced sexual enjoyment.

Conclusion:

Overall women found the placebo gel to be acceptable. The amount of lubrication provided by gel, gel being easy and convenient to use, non-interference with sexual pleasure and partner involvement were keys to gel acceptability.

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