

# PC51 Vaginal Washing: A Threat In Evaluating Microbicides Effectiveness

**Bisalomo Mwanza, Seter Siziya, Maureen Chisembele, Ruth Kasonde, Ward Siyamusantu, Olipa Sakala**

## **ABSTRACT TEXT**

### Background:

The vaginal cleaning practice is likely to affect the evaluation of Microbicides efficacy in MDP 301 Trial. The cleaning that includes wiping and washing inside the vagina would wash away the microbicides or react with the products used in cleaning. In Zambia the practice of vaginal washing was explored both in feasibility and Pilot study.

### Method:

In the feasibility study, 12 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with the general community and 6 In-Depth interviews (IDIs) with key informants were conducted and in a survey, 400 questionnaires were administered to 174 men and 226 women. A total of 40 women enrolled in the Pilot study used the placebo gel for 1 month. Each woman used a weekly coital diary to record sexual behavioural data. 38 IDIs (2 participants dropped out) with women and 9 IDIs with male partners were conducted.

### Results:

The survey indicated that 97.4% of the women washed the inside of the vagina and 140 (80.5%) men assented to the practice. They used products like soap, cloth and water with the aid of a finger. Reasons for cleaning were for hygiene purposes. Responses on time of cleaning show that, 22.7% cleaned as need arose, 7.7% cleaned after sex, 27.4% cleaned in the evening and 33.7% cleaned in the morning. The feasibility FGDs and IDIs indicated that most women cleaned both inside and outside the vagina with water and soap. The majority of the men supported this practice. Of the 38 women interviewed in the pilot study, 36 (94.7%) cleaned their vagina after sex, 20 (52.6%) washed inside the vagina with cold water (4 used soap while 1 used dettol), and 16 (42%) wiped both inside and outside the vagina with a cloth. A total of 31 (81.5%) women cleaned less than an hour after sexual intercourse. The reason for cleaning was to dry themselves up.

### Conclusion:

Vaginal washing is common in the study population and most women take it culturally as a norm. This practice would affect the evaluation of the microbicides effectiveness. It erodes the vaginal mucosal lining and kills the needed lactobacilli hence putting women at risk of HIV/STI infection

**Mr. Bisalomo Mwanza** - Social Science Research Assistant: Microbicides Development Programme, [chitungwi@gmail.com](mailto:chitungwi@gmail.com), tel +260 3 230834, fax +260 3 230868, MDP Zambia, Box 670555, MAZABUKA, 10101, ZAMBIA