PC52 Measuring and assessing variability in self-reported sexual behavior data collected using different methods during the Microbicides Development Programme pilot study at the Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies in the Umkhanyakude district of Kw

Misiwe Mzimela, Mitzy Gafos

ABSTRACT TEXT

Background:
In the Microbicides Development Programme (MDP) pilot study, 51 women were asked to use a placebo vaginal gel before sex for 4 weeks. Three methods of sexual behaviour data collection were used in order to evaluate the accuracy of data collected.

Methodology:
Enrolled women completed a coital diary (CD) for all 4 weeks, completed a sexual behaviour questionnaire at the end of 4 weeks and then an in-depth interview (IDI) within the following week. All three methods collected data on the same time period (last week of study if had sex, otherwise all 4 weeks of study). Variations in reporting were probed at the end of the IDI. Results of these three methods were triangulated and assessed for variability. We analysed variation between reporting of the number of sex acts, number of partners, type of sex (vaginal or anal), condom usage, and gel usage.

Results:
Of the 51 enrolled women, 33 (65%) had sex in the last week. 18 (54%) of these women reported different numbers of sex acts in different data collection methods. Where there was a variance, 72% of women reported a higher number of sex acts in the interviews. All women reported only 1 sex partner throughout. 1 women reported anal sex in the CD and IDI but not the questionnaire. Of the 18 discrepant reports, we looked at whether the percentage of condom and gel use per number of sex acts differed across the 3 methods, and this occurred in 4 (22%) cases. Out of the 15 cases where the number of sex acts corresponded, 2 (13%) reports showed variance in condom use and another 2 (13%) in gel use. The majority of discrepancies were reported by the women to be due to misunderstandings or recall bias. Further analysis of the in-depth interviews is necessary to assess the level of social desirability bias.

Conclusion:
Using multiple methods of sexual behaviour data collection methods adds value in terms of being able to report on the level of variance thereby improving the confidence with which the data can be interpreted.

Mrs Misiwe Mzimela - Social Science Coordinator: Africa Centre For Health And Population Studies, mmzimela@africacentre.ac.za, tel +27 (0)35 550 7500, PO Box 198, Mtubatuba, KwaZulu Natal, MTUBATUBA, 3935, SOUTH AFRICA