

## **PC76 Frequency of sex acts and condom use in a Microbicides Development Programme Pilot Study in South Africa**

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### **ABSTRACT TEXT**

#### **Background:**

In preparation for the MDP301 Phase III trial, a pilot study was conducted in the Umkhanyakude district of KwaZulu Natal, South Africa, to assess acceptability of using a vaginal gel (placebo).

#### **Methodology:**

Women were recruited from local family planning clinics. 147 women were screened, of whom 76 were eligible and 51 were enrolled. Women were asked to insert one dose of a placebo gel vaginally within 1 hour prior to each sex act, and were followed for 4 weeks. At each study visit women were counselled and encouraged to use condoms. Information on frequency of sex acts and condom use during sex, in either the last week or last 4 weeks, was collected using questionnaires at screening, enrolment, and at study conclusion. Condom use was categorized as "always," "most of the time," "sometimes" and "never." Data was analyzed using Stata v.8. One woman dropped out prior to study completion, and was excluded from analysis.

#### **Results:**

Mean number of sex acts/week increased from 2.6 (SD 1.6, range 1-7) at enrolment (n=32) to 4.0 (SD 2.7, range 0-12) at study conclusion (n=34) (p=0.014). The proportion of women who had sex in the last week and reported using condoms "always" or "most of the time" increased from 37.5% at enrolment (n=32) to 47.1% at study conclusion (n=34) (p=0.432). Conversely, the proportion of women who never used condoms during sex in the last week decreased from 59.4% at enrolment (n=32) to 38.2% at study conclusion (n=34) (p=0.086). The proportion of women who used condoms "always" or "most of the time" in the past 4 weeks, as well as those who never used condoms, did not change from enrolment to study conclusion (p=0.92).

#### **Conclusion:**

Average frequency of sex acts increased significantly between study enrolment and conclusion, possibly due to favourable gel acceptability in the study population. Increase in condom use "always" or "most of the time" in the past week, while not statistically significant, may reflect the impact of safe-sex counselling.

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