

PD32 “Roadshows” as a Community Engagement Strategy for Microbicide Research in Rural South Africa

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ABSTRACT TEXT

Issues:

During the Microbicides Development Programme pilot study at the Africa Centre for Health and Population Studies, ‘roadshows’ were used as a community engagement strategy to assist recruitment to the study.

Description:

‘Roadshows’ are events that are organized in collaboration with local izindunas, or traditional leaders of rural areas and held in various communities within the catchment area of the Africa Centre. They are monthly interactive presentations conducted in a different rural area each month in order to encourage community health and increase HIV awareness and understanding, support recruitment into the microbicide study and address misconceptions regarding the study.

Community members are informed of upcoming roadshows in their community through the distribution of information at local schools, taxi ranks and through Africa Centre employees and community leaders. During the roadshows, talks are given about the Africa Centre and specific studies, as well as about research generally. Music and local entertainment (ie. performances, sporting matches) are used to attract crowds and questions with accompanying prizes for correct answers are posed to the audience to ensure that the information presented was understood by those in attendance. Attendance ranges from 150-500 at each roadshow, although there is one urban area as defined by high population density where roadshow attendance and participation tends to be lower. At each event in 2005, a representative from the microbicides team gave a 15-20 minute presentation and distributed information sheets. The study team also solicited feedback from the community about key concerns regarding microbicides and the pilot study and had an opportunity to address these individual concerns. These included questions about previous microbicide trials, safety data and access to gel.

Conclusion:

Multiple community engagement strategies are necessary to foster community understanding and enable achievement of recruitment targets. Roadshows appear to support these aims in a rural South African setting. Additionally, they provide assistance to the study team in the development of necessary resources for future community involvement and recruitment efforts.

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