

PC81 Preferences for female barrier methods and their distribution: what South African women want

Fern Terris-Prestholt, Lilani Kumaranayake, Catherine MacPhail, Dirk Taljaard, Motlalepule Tsepe, Siphon Gaph Phatedi, Helen Rees, Charlotte Watts

ABSTRACT TEXT

Background:

Women urgently need access to HIV-prevention technologies that they can use to protect themselves from HIV. Different female HIV-prevention products are currently in trial or available. However, there is limited understanding of women's relative preferences for different products. This study reports women's expressed preference for microbicides, the female condom, and the diaphragm, and methods of distribution and promotion.

Methodology:

1017 sexually active women (18-45 years) were randomly sampled households in three Johannesburg townships and interviewed in private in their homes. Background information including socio-economic status (SES), partner type and condom use in last sex-act was elicited. Respondents were provided information and shown prototypes the three products. Women were asked to directly to state their preferences for different products and distribution methods (outlet type, how to collect product, message/picture on package). Chi-square analysis was used to test the null-hypothesis that all response options were equally likely.

Results:

Women came from a wide range of SES backgrounds. 55% of women's last sex-acts were with a cohabitating partner, 31% reported using a condom. Individual HIV risk perception was evenly distributed. Most women said that microbicides would be their preferred product, followed by the diaphragm, female condoms and male condoms. Preferred distribution channels were clinic and chemist, while supermarket and corner store were rarely chosen. Distribution 'in a private room' was most preferred, followed by 'from a dispensing machine or box', 'from a person behind a counter' and 'from a shelf' were less preferred. Of the four marketing messages presented 'HIV prevention' had the largest preference, followed by 'women's empowerment', 'pregnancy prevention' and 'extra pleasure'. Though potentially subject to reporting bias, most women reported they would have used a condom or one of these methods in their last sex-act if they were available.

Table 1: Directly elicited preferences and respondents' choices

	Response options % of respondents choices				P-value
Individual HIV risk perception	High 22%	Medium 26%	Low 23%	No risk 26%	0.218
Preferred product	Microbicide 48%	Diaphragm 28%	Female condom 13%	Male condom 10%	<0.001
Preferred distribution channel	Clinic 49%	Chemist 40%	Supermarket 7%	Corner store 5%	<0.001
Preferred collection method	'In a private room' 36%	'From a dispensing machine or box' 26%	'From a person behind a counter' 17%	'From a shelf' 16%	<0.001
Preferred marketing messages	'HIV prevention' 45%	'Women's empowerment' 30%	'Pregnancy prevention' 17%	'Extra pleasure' 8%	<0.001

Conclusion:

Women have strong preferences between products, distribution and promotion strategies. Increasing product choice and access is likely to increase women's ability to protect themselves.

Future research is needed to identify market segments to maximise women's uptake of all barrier methods.

Ms Fern Terris-Prestholt: London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, Fern.Terris-Prestholt@lshtm.ac.uk, tel +44 20 7612 7891, fax +44 20 7637 5391, Keppel St, LONDON, WC1E 7HT, UNITED KINGDOM