

# **PC64 Innovative uses of multi-method triangulation to increase the accuracy of adherence and sexual behaviour data in the MDP301 trial**

**Robert Pool, Microbicides Development Programme Team**

## **ABSTRACT TEXT**

### Issues:

To determine the effectiveness of vaginal microbicides we need accurate data on product adherence, sexual behaviour, and vaginal practices. This information has generally been collected through interviews (usually closed quantitative formats, sometimes complemented by open qualitative formats). Recently, concern about desirability bias has led to experimentation with self-assessment tools (coital diaries, ACASI). Various forms of observation have also been used, as well as “hard” biological indicators such as STI incidence. These methods all have strengths and weaknesses. One way of increasing accuracy has been to combine different methods and triangulate the results. The results from such studies have been mixed, however, with the different methods often generating different and conflicting results. In other words, studies using triangulation often reveal the problem of inaccuracy without solving it.

### Description:

In MDP301 we are trying to increase the accuracy of key data by integrating triangulation into the trial methodology in an innovative way: first by directly linking questionnaire-style CRFs with in-depth interviews and coital diaries so that all three instruments cover the same period of time, thus making direct comparison of specific sex acts possible, and, second, by trying to resolve inconsistencies by discussing them directly with participants in question as they arise. We have designed a comparison form which enables the interviewer to have key data from the CRF and coital diary available for cross-reference during the in-depth interview, and we have developed an in-depth interview format that makes the key data from the in-depth interview immediately available for comparison without having to wait for transcription and translation. This is further facilitated by using short recall periods. These techniques have been piloted during the MDP301 Pilot Study and are currently being used in the main phase III trial. They will be described in detail during the presentation and examples presented.

### Conclusion:

Multi-method triangulation can improve the accuracy of adherence and sexual behaviour data, but it must be focused on short recall periods and must address and solve inconsistencies directly rather than just identifying them.

**Dr Robert Pool:** London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, Robert.pool@lshtm.ac.uk, tel +44 1234 269627, fax +44 20 299 4720, 50 Bedford Square, LONDON, UNITED KINGDOM