

Gafos, M. J. (2008). A preference for hot sex! Similarity of descriptors used to explain local vaginal products and vaginal investigational products in the mdp301 clinical trial in the umkhanyakude district of northern kwazulu natal. Microbicides 2008. Delhi.

Background: The use of local vaginal products within a community is often referred to as being incompatible with the introduction of vaginal microbicide gels. This view is based on an assumption that vaginal products are used to achieve "dry" sex and that microbicides would result in "wet" sex. This analysis challenges that assumed contradiction, describes the desired effects of vaginal products beyond "dry" sex, and proposes a symbiotic relationship between the social acceptability of vaginal products and the introduction of microbicide gels. Methods: In-depth interviews were conducted with a random sub-sample of women in the MDP301 Phase III microbicide trial. Data from 30 interviews were analysed to compare the discourse surrounding use of local vaginal products and trial products. Result: The majority of women were familiar with a range of vaginal products used locally. The terms used to describe the desired effect of these products corresponded to the descriptors used to explain the experience of using the trial products, thereby suggesting a symbiotic relationship between the sexual experience of using any of the vaginal products. The descriptors included being 'ready', 'alright', 'hot', 'tight', 'dry', or 'nice'. However, the concept of increased sexual pleasure for the woman was more pronounced in relation to the use of the investigational products. Local vaginal products were also associated with hiding infidelity, or keeping a male partner, and these themes also emerged marginally in relation to the trial products. Conclusions: In a community with a high level of knowledge and social acceptance of using vaginal products to enhance sexual pleasure, the use of a microbicide/placebo vaginal gel appears to be contextualised and described within cultural norms. This may indicate that social acceptability of vaginal products for sexual enhancement may prove to be a facilitator to the introduction of an effective vaginal microbicide in the future.