

FEATURED RESEARCH

The future of female-controlled barrier methods for HIV prevention:
female condoms and lessons learned

Kaler, Amy. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*. November-December 2004; Vol 6, No 6: 501-516.

Abstract: In the context of HIV/AIDS, there is increasing interest in female controlled barrier methods. HIV prevention suffers from a critical 'technology gap': namely, the lack of products to enable women to reduce their own risk of sexually transmitted infection, independent of their male partners. An ideal technology should be low-cost, free of side effects, effective against both HIV and other STIs, and undetectable by male sexual partners. A first generation of barriers is already in circulation: namely, female condoms.

But what can we learn from female condoms that will help to increase the chance that programmes focused on other barrier methods will be successful? This paper draws on lessons from the past decade of FC programming. Interviews with 34 professional stakeholders in FC programming from the USA and South Africa highlight a number of factors that can help create public and institutional cultures, in which barrier methods can be considered feasible and can be put into use.

NPR Interview with Dr. Paul Blumenthal Discusses Diaphragm Use

On January 4, 2005, Dr. Paul Blumenthal, Director of Contraceptive Research and Programs at Johns Hopkins University, discussed birth control statistics in an interview on *National Public Radio's "Talk of the Nation."* With host, Neal Conan, Dr. Blumenthal talked about a new report from the National Center for Health Statistics, stating that nearly every sexually active adult woman in America has used birth control at some point; however, the same study indicates that the number of women having unprotected sex has increased from 5 1/2 percent 10 years ago to 7 1/2 percent in 2002. Dr. Blumenthal also addressed the growing range of contraceptive options, how access to contraception may affect usage, the rates of unintended pregnancies, and how insurance affects women. Furthermore, Dr. Blumenthal mentioned that he thinks the diaphragm has a "very bright future."

"The diaphragm is also interesting, and I think that the diaphragm's going to make a comeback."

He continued by saying, "The diaphragm is also interesting, and I think—and maybe you heard it first here—that the diaphragm's going to make a comeback. One of the things that the study showed actually was that there was more dual use, and what I mean by dual use is the women surveyed were using both a hormonal method, say a birth control pill, also using a condom, and they were protecting themselves from sexually transmitted diseases." Dr. Blumenthal continued, "Now the diaphragm is interesting because it's a female-controlled method, and worldwide it's sometimes difficult for a woman to negotiate condom use by the man, so it's a female-controlled method that protects the cervix, and by protecting the cervix it really is protecting what we think is a key portal, entryway for disease entities like gonorrhea or chlamydia or, importantly, HIV."

For the full text of this interview, please email admin@ibisreproductivehealth.org.

New Fact Sheets on Women and HIV/AIDS from Kaiser Family Foundation

Just in time for World AIDS Day 2004, the Kaiser Family Foundation updated its fact sheets on "Women and HIV/AIDS in the U.S." and "The HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the United States." These fact sheets provide an overview and key trends, the impact on specific groups, such as minorities, women, youth, and men who have sex with men, and the U.S. government's response. In addition, the December Kaiser Health Poll Report featured data from the 2004 Kaiser "Survey of Americans on HIV/AIDS" conducted to explore the public's views on the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the U.S., including perceived progress on the epidemic, personal concern about becoming infected, and knowledge about the disease in this country.

[Women and HIV/AIDS in the US Fact Sheet](#)
[HIV/AIDS Epidemic in the US Fact Sheet](#)
[Kaiser Health Poll Report Featured Topic](#)
[Other Kaiser World AIDS Day Resources](#)

Can diaphragms protect women from HIV? An update on the MIRA trial

As the Methods for Improving Access to Reproductive Health in Africa (MIRA) trial progresses, we move closer to an answer. MIRA is a randomized controlled trial of the effectiveness of the Ortho All-Flex diaphragm and Replens lubricant gel for HIV/STI prevention. The study, a four organization collaboration led by Dr. Nancy Padian at UCSF and funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, is currently underway in Harare, Zimbabwe and Durban and Johannesburg, South Africa. Enrollment began in Harare in August 2003; Durban in November 2003; and Johannesburg in April 2004. Through the end of January 2005, staff at the 5 enrollment sites in these 3 cities had screened over 6000 women and enrolled nearly 70%, or over 3000, of the required 4500 participants. Enrollment is expected to continue through September 2005, and results will be available in 2007. Sub-studies are currently evaluating the relationship between diaphragm use and Human Papilloma virus (HPV), Bacterial Vaginosis (BV), Herpes Simplex Virus Type II (HSV2), and Pelvic Inflammatory Disease (PID). Another sub-study is evaluating the educational materials used for the trial. The MIRA team is collaborating on social science and policy/advocacy activities concurrently with the trial.

For an updated MIRA fact sheet, [click here](#) or go to www.cervicalbarriers.org.

Museum puts contraception on display

Rows of cervical caps huddle like a little village of igloos. A wide array of condoms are near the douches. The items are part of The History of Contraception Museum, which has become the latest addition to the Dittrick Medical History Center at Case Western Reserve University. More than 650 items make up what is described as the only collection of its kind in the world, representing the often creative practices and products devised in the hope of preventing unwanted pregnancies. Where items are not available for show, words explain. In ancient Egypt, crocodile dung was employed as a suppository before intercourse. Beaver-testicle tea was brewed by Canadian women for contraception. The collection includes some 350 intrauterine devices bearing such exotic names as the "Russian Cross," "Butterfly," "Supercoil," "Sea Tangle Tent" and the ominous "10 Armed Device." Percy Skuy, 72, of Toronto, a retired Canadian pharmacist, spent nearly 40 years assembling the museum.



Tales of Contraception - Poster

The items were largely donated by medical professionals and family planning services, or are recreations of historical contraceptive devices. Three years ago, Skuy started searching for a site that could offer a permanent home for the museum with sufficient staffing, public access and an educational/academic component. He found all his criteria met at Dittrick, a museum and library dedicated to medical history. James Edmonson, Dittrick's chief curator, said the History of Contraception Museum "embodies social history, ethical issues, medical concerns and women's issues." Edmonson noted that the collection also has 150 reference books. On the non-academic side, Edmonson conceded there can be an initial "giggle factor." He said the collection shows that people have been imagining means of conception for more than 2,000 years. "It transcends society's religions and cultures," he said. "There's a universality about it that's intriguing." (Information from: [The Plain Dealer](#), Associated Press, 12/5/04)

More than 40 Screenings of Microbicides' Film *In Women's Hands*

During the week of World AIDS Day –December 1 -new and old partners all over the world came together to launch the Global Campaign for Microbicides' new film "*In Women's Hands*." The film aims to target donors, policy makers, advocates, women, and others on the issues surrounding HIV/AIDS. It is the Campaign's hope that the personal stories portrayed "*In Women's Hands*" will speak to the need for microbicides, their potential role, the importance of leadership on this issue -- and provide an inspiration for action.

With well-established networks throughout the world, the Campaign coordinated film screenings of this short video, often along with a moderated panel and audience discussion. More than forty film screenings took place in thirteen countries including: Australia, Bangladesh, Belgium, Botswana, 5 cities in Canada, Denmark, Ireland, Nigeria, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom, and more than 20 cities in the U.S. The screenings were hosted by organizations as diverse as Oxfam in Australia, University of Toronto in Canada, the Norwegian Association Against AIDS, Planned Parenthood Mar Monte in California, the African American Education Cultural Center in Hawaii, and the Oberlin Student Global AIDS Campaign in Ohio. For a complete list of screenings go to www.global-campaign.org/worldaidsday.htm

Across the world "*In Women's Hands*" was well-received and generated positive feedback and media attention. One audience member wrote to the Global Campaign after seeing the film at the Positive Women's Network in Vancouver, Canada. "Thank you for producing a very powerful, informative and emotional overview of the need for microbicides and an understanding of the environments in which clinical trials are being conducted. [This film] will be an extraordinary tool in raising awareness and advocacy for microbicide development."

In the coming year, the film will be made available to interested organizations and individuals to host their own screening or to use the film at meetings, conferences and other events. The film can be requested at the Global Campaign's website: www.global-campaign.org/film.htm for a small fee for those from donor countries, and for free for organizations from the Global South.

New Diaphragm Bibliography Now Available

Ibis Reproductive Health and CBAS are happy to announce a new bibliography of recent articles on the diaphragm. Ibis used the annotated bibliography from the 2002 Diaphragm Renaissance conference as a starting point and added to the list of recent, relevant published literature on the diaphragm.

The bibliography contains a list of citations in alphabetical order hyperlinked to an expanded list of citations including abstracts, following the format set forth in the Diaphragm Renaissance bibliography. The bibliography is available in the [CBAS download center](#) or request a copy by e-mailing info@cervicalbarriers.org.

AmfAR Issue Brief Analyzes Effectiveness of Male and Female Condoms in Preventing HIV

The American Foundation for AIDS Research (amfAR)'s January issue brief analyzes the effectiveness of male and female condoms in preventing the transmission of HIV and finds that when used consistently and correctly, "male condoms are 80% to 95% effective in reducing the risk of infection, while female condoms are 94% to 97% effective in reducing risk."

"Male condoms are 80% to 95% effective in reducing the risk of infection, while female condoms are 94% to 97% effective in reducing risk. "



Female condom



Male condom

The brief concludes that the "scientific evidence does not support" recent governmental policy changes that stress a lack of condom efficacy in preventing HIV transmission, as both male and female condoms are "highly effective"—especially when used in a comprehensive prevention program—in preventing infection (amfAR Issue Brief, January 2005).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Event: Population Association of America 2005 Annual Meeting

Date: March 31- April 2, 2005

Location: Philadelphia, PA

Website: <http://paa2005.princeton.edu>

Description: PAA members include demographers, sociologists, economists, public health professionals, and other individuals interested in research and education in the population field. The PAA Annual Meeting provides a forum for the presentation of scientific papers, workshops, discussion groups and job opportunities.

Event: From Abortion Rights to Social Justice: Building the Movement for Reproductive Freedom

Date: April 1-3, 2005

Location: Hampshire College, Amherst, MA

Website: www.clpp.hampshire.edu

Description: If you are committed to reproductive rights and social justice, this is THE place to be the first weekend in April. For 18 years, people have gathered over this weekend at Hampshire College to unite and rally for reproductive justice. Conference speakers address reproductive freedom as it relates to a broad range of social justice initiatives including economic justice, healthcare reform, racial equality, peace, freedom from violence, youth liberation, civil liberties, and LGBTQ rights.

Event: National AIDS Update Conference

Date: April 10-13, 2005

Location: Oakland, CA

Website: www.amfar.org/cgi-bin/iowa/nauc

Description: Attracts health care professionals, service providers, community advocates, and people living with HIV/AIDS. It presents the latest information on critical prevention, treatment, and care issues, aiming to translate research advances into practical strategies to help end the AIDS pandemic and improve the lives of people living with HIV/AIDS.

There will be a special symposium event on Monday, April 11, focusing on HIV prevention for women.

Event: Global Health Council Conference

Date: May 31-June 3, 2005

Location: Washington DC

Website: www.globalhealth.org/conference

Description: What does it take to make these systems actually deliver the public goods on which billions of humans rely, to make "Health for All" more than a slogan? What are the key enablers, and the major constraints, to effective programs? What can be done to address these issues from the outside, and how can the needed internal capacities be built and strengthened to make programmatic gains sustainable by those whose stake is the greatest?

Event: Second South African AIDS Conference

Date: June 7-10, 2005

Location: Durban, South Africa

Website: www.sa-aidsconference.com

Description: The South African AIDS Conference aims to marshal the best of knowledge, practice and research on HIV into further united action and implementation and to spur a new spirit of unity and accountability for all.

Event: International AIDS Society Conference

Date: July 24-27, 2005

Location: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Website: www.ias-2005.org

Description: The scientific program of the 3rd IAS Conference on HIV Pathogenesis and Treatment aims to provide new insights into HIV disease development, prevention and care that can lead to new research directions, help advance translational research and move theoretic advances into clinical practice and prevention programs.

Event: 10th International Women and Health Meeting

Date: September 21-25, 2005

Location: New Delhi, India

Website: www.10iwhmindia.org

Description: Seeks to highlight politics, policies and issues that have adverse effect on women's health and simultaneously bring out the linkages and interconnections of these seemingly disparate phenomena.

To comment on anything you read in the CBAS newsletter or to contribute a story, event, or news item, please email info@cervicalbarriers.org.