

Providers' Attitudes About Nonoxynol-9 (N-9): An Impediment to Microbicide Acceptability?

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Background

- Health care providers play a key role in introducing and promoting new prevention technologies
- For the female condom there is growing evidence that negative provider bias has impeded acceptance
- In microbicide acceptability research, little attention has been given to the potential role of providers.

The Problem

- Preliminary N-9 trial results announced in Durban, AIDS 2000
 - What do health care providers understand about the trial?
 - How are they counseling clients?
- What are their views of microbicides in general?
- What are their views of harm reduction?

Setting

- Five health care agencies
 - 1 STD clinic consortium (STD)
 - 1 Family planning clinic consortium (FP)
 - 1 OB-GYN department (OB-GYN)
 - 2 Community-based AIDS service organizations (CBO)
- All conduct HIV/STD counseling

Data Collection and Analysis

- Qualitative interviews conducted summer 2001
- Targeted health care providers and managers from each site
- 77 interviews completed across 5 agencies
- Audio-taped, transcribed and coded for major themes

Sample Description

(N=77)

- 19 Medical providers
- 12 Psychologists/Social workers
- 30 HIV/STD counselors/Health educators
- 7 Peer educators, addiction and harm reduction counselors
- 9 Administrators

Interview Topics

- What do providers know and think about the concept of microbicides?
- What do they know about the N-9 trials?
- What would they like to see in a microbicide in order to recommend it?
- How would the efficacy level influence their counseling and recommendations for use?

General Response to Microbicides

— High enthusiasm coupled with low awareness

Responses to N-9 Trial

- N-9 spermicide is well known, but microbicide trial is not
- Misunderstanding and confusion high among those aware of the trial

Impact on Agency Counseling Protocols

- Backlash and anger
- Uncertainty about how to counsel clients

Concerns about Microbicides

- High efficacy
- Low toxicity
- Can we believe the science?
- Will a chemical be viewed as effective as a physical barrier?

Recommendations for Use: With or Without Condoms?

- If less effective than condoms
- If as effective as condoms

Conclusions

- Providers lack specific knowledge about microbicides but were enthusiastic about the concept
- High efficacy and safety were key concerns
- Most providers were unaware of N-9 trial findings
- Confusion about about the N-9 trial results evoked broader concerns about when to believe the science
- Misgivings about implementing harm reduction counseling were common
- Current methods of disseminating appropriate and timely information to providers are not working

Recommendations

- Information and Guidelines: Develop understandable guidelines about N-9 products: lubricated condoms and pregnancy prevention methods
- Awareness: Educate about new research, highlighting current focus on safety testing
- Harm Reduction: More research and training on counseling around less than 100% effective products