

Joint WHO/UNAIDS Statement on Results of a Vaginal Microbicide trial (MDP301)

GENEVA, 14 December 2009 – Today the Microbicides Development Program (MDP), a joint Medical Research Council and Department for International Development initiative, announced results from the MDP 301 study of the candidate microbicide gel PRO 2000 that was tested for its impact in reducing the risk of HIV infection in women. The study was conducted in six research centres across four African countries (South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) and involved collaboration with teams in the United Kingdom and Spain. The study involved over 9000 women at risk of HIV infection and showed a very clear result of no difference in the rate of HIV infection between women given the PRO 2000 gel and those given placebo gel.

While this result is disappointing, the teams conducting the study must be congratulated on having implemented such a large, scientifically rigorous, ethically sound trial that engaged the communities in which it was conducted in an exemplary, participatory way. This was a successful trial with a disappointing but unequivocal result.

The results show that the product was safe. In general, women liked using the product and adherence to the product was very high. This sends a clear message that there is a demand for products that women can use to protect themselves from HIV infection.

As part of the trial, women received intensive counselling on HIV risk reduction, male and female condoms, and prompt treatment for sexually transmitted infections. Despite this, the overall incidence of HIV in the study was 4.6 per 100 woman-years, demonstrating a clear need for additional methods of reducing the risk of infection.

There have been advances in the field of microbicides in the past few years, including development of new approaches using antiretroviral-containing microbicides to prevent HIV infection and new methods of screening candidate products for potential efficacy before large scale trials are launched. With these advances it is hoped that the next generation of microbicide trials will eventually produce a safe, acceptable and efficacious product. The search for such a product must continue.

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UNAIDS is an innovative joint venture of the United Nations, bringing together the efforts and resources of the UNAIDS Secretariat and ten UN system organizations in the AIDS response. The Secretariat headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland—with staff on the ground in more than 80 countries. The Cosponsors include UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, UNDP, UNFPA, UNODC, ILO, UNESCO, WHO and the World Bank. Contributing to achieving global commitments to universal access to comprehensive interventions for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support is the number one priority for UNAIDS. Visit the UNAIDS website at www.unaids.org