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**EVALUATING THE POTENTIAL FOR A MALE MICROBICIDE AMONG FISHERMEN
ALONG LAKE VICTORIA IN KISUMU DISTRICT, KENYA**

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OBJECTIVE

To evaluate the potential for a male microbicide among fishermen along Lake Victoria.

METHODS

We evaluated the safety and acceptability of ethanol in emollient gel as a topical male microbicide. During this Phase I randomized double-blind placebo-controlled cross over trial, we screened 168 and enrolled 34 fishermen. At baseline we collected information on socio-economic and demographic characteristics and sexual behavior. We also pre- and post-test counseled for STIs, obtained blood samples for HIV, HSV-2 and syphilis serologies and provided appropriate treatment and referrals. At follow up visits for the 34 enrolled participants, we collected information on acceptability and adherence to study product.

RESULTS

Of the 168 fishermen screened, 61% were over 24 years old and almost half (47%) had post-primary education and earned a median monthly income of USD 115. About two-thirds (66%) were married and three quarters (77%) had children. Overall, 15% reported current extra-marital sex and 40% reported more than 10 sexual lifetime partners. Two-thirds of the fishermen had concurrent sexual relationship but only 14% used condoms consistently. STI prevalence was high with 27% being HIV sero-positive and 58% HSV-2 sero-positive. Of the 34 fishermen enrolled, 70% reported adherence to product use. Almost half (47%) found the product very easy to use and 43% would be willing to use it for an extended period. Most (97%) reported that they would recommend the product to a friend.

CONCLUSION

Given the high risk sexual practice, and low condom use coupled with interest and adherence to microbicide use, this population could benefit from such novel STI prevention option.