

What is the future of HIV prevention?

Cologne, 26th April 2010. For decades, we have been telling people that the best method of HIV prevention is the male condom. In the meantime scientists have been working on additional means of prevention. The name given to the range of options being investigated is new prevention technologies (NPT).

Treatment as Prevention: With the right medication, people living with HIV can lead an almost normal life. A Swiss study published two years ago found that with combination therapy it is possible for the level of virus in their bloodstream to fall to a level whereby they are no longer sexually infectious under certain conditions.

Microbicides: Formulated as creams or gels, microbicides could prevent the transmission of HIV in the future. Used vaginally or rectally, these methods could meet the needs of women in particular because they can be used without male participation. "We need more research and financial support for this research and development," said Yasmin Halima, Director of the Global Campaign for Microbicides (GCM), an international NGO dedicated to accelerating access to new HIV prevention tools, especially for women.

Vaccines: In the future, HIV vaccines could also play a role. The International AIDS Vaccine Initiative (IAVI) has been advancing HIV vaccine research for many years. At the end of last year a large trial in Thailand was considered a breakthrough. Speaking about the trial, Andrea von Lieven, Clinical Program Manager of IAVI commented: "The result showed for the first time that it is possible, probable even, to reduce HIV infection through vaccination. This is an incredible scientific achievement."

Female Condoms: While microbicides and vaccines are still in research, female condoms already exist. Women can already use them to protect themselves from HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. Female condoms, easily available for purchase on the internet, are proven to be as effective as the male condom.

The German Charitable Foundation Health and Sexuality (GSSG) advocates for greater investment in new prevention technologies and is a partner of GCM and IAVI. GSSG is looking forward to the International AIDS Conference in July 2010 in Vienna where scientists from all over the world will come together to exchange information about new prevention technologies and announce their results.

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