

31: Stability of Attitudes About Microbicides in Young Women

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Abstract:

Purpose: To assess attitudes toward vaginal microbicides for sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention and stability of those attitudes over a 3-month period among female adolescents.

Keywords: microbicides | sexually transmitted infection (STI) | female adolescents | published abstract

Article:

Purpose

To assess attitudes toward vaginal microbicides for sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevention and stability of those attitudes over a 3-month period among female adolescents.

Methods

Women 14-22 years of age were recruited as part of a large, longitudinal study of STI and behavior. Recruitment took place at urban primary care clinics. In-depth in-person interviews were administered quarterly, with part of the interview focused on microbicide acceptability. Acceptability was assessed with 9 items, each of which described a scenario uniquely defined with attributes taken from 4 dimensions: 1) Timing of application (1 hour pre-coitus; 10 minutes pre-coitus; 10-minutes post-coitus); 2) Texture (Greasy; Non-greasy); 3) Contraception (Yes; No); and 4) Efficacy relative to condoms (As good as; Almost as good as; Not as good as). Using an 11-point response format (0-100), participants rated their willingness to try each microbicide. Conjoint analysis was used to evaluate relative preferences with respect to microbicide attributes (i.e., part-worth utilities). The range of part-worth utilities was translated into Importance Scores, which indicated the extent to which dimensions contributed to ratings of the microbicide items. Importance Scores summed across the four characteristics always equal 100. Stability was assessed by examining the 9-item scale at first microbicide interview (T1) and at the next

quarterly interview (T2). The scale demonstrated excellent internal reliability at both time points (coefficient alphas = 0.92 & 0.89 respectively).

Results

The 159 participants were 14-22 years old (M = 18 yrs; 92% African-American). Mean acceptability scale scores did not change from T1 (M = 43.7) to T2 (M = 46.2): paired $t = -1.4$, $p = 0.15$. The T1 and T2 scores were significantly correlated ($r = 0.62$, $p < 0.001$). At both time points conjoint analysis revealed the same pattern of results: Efficacy contributed most strongly to ratings (As good as condoms preferred; Importance Scores = 59 & 51 respectively), followed by Contraception (contraception preferred; Importance Scores = 30 & 32), Timing (1 hour pre-coital least preferred; Importance Scores = 9 & 12), and Texture (non-greasy preferred; Importance Scores = 1 & 4).

Conclusions

Attitudes about vaginal microbicides were relatively stable over a 3-month time period. Mean T1 and T2 scores did not differ and were moderately strongly correlated. In addition, the conjoint preference profile was the same across time. These young women as a group expressed a clear and stable preference for microbicides that works as well as condoms, have contraceptive properties, and do not have to be administered 1 hour before coitus. The data show that adolescent women are able to form coherent attitudes about hypothetical microbicides, and illustrate reproducible factors that may influence product choice and use if microbicides become commercially available.

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