

GLOBAL CONSULTATION ON PERSONAL LUBRICANTS

8-10 November 2016 | United Nations Conference Centre | Bangkok, Thailand

Personal lubricants are widely used for sexual intercourse by men, women, and transgender individuals around the world. Used in combination with condoms, personal lubricants reduce friction, enhance comfort and sexual pleasure, and help to provide greater protection against unwanted pregnancy, HIV, and other STIs. However, in recent years there have been growing concerns about the safety of lubricant products, especially their potential to cause irritation and epithelial damage to the anal or vaginal lining, and perhaps increase susceptibility to transmitting HIV and other STIs.

The Global Consultation on Personal Lubricants, held over three days in Bangkok, Thailand, was the first multi-sector meeting on personal lubricants of its kind, attracting tremendous interest from lubricant manufacturers, researchers and technical experts, international organizations, and sexual and reproductive health advocates.

Convened by UNFPA, WHO, USAID, and the IPPF, the meeting aimed to clarify the science and latest research on personal lubricants and develop general guidance on manufacturing non-toxic, long-lasting, quality-assured, condom-compatible lubricants.

For the more than 80 participants in attendance, the meeting was the first step in a long-term, ambitious global effort to ensure women, men, and transgender individuals have access to safe, effective, and affordable lubricant no matter where they live or how they want to use it.

“We learned there is no one-size-fits-all lubricant, and understanding the research and learning about anatomy and physiology helped to connect all the issues.”

ON THE AGENDA

Participants heard the latest research on lubricant safety and risks, current guidance on manufacturing and procurement, and the needs and concerns of those who use lubricants, including sex workers and other high-risk populations.

The meeting produced three sets of recommendations and action plans—one from manufacturers, one from researchers, and one from community groups—with short-term targets and longer term activities and priorities. These will guide efforts in 2017 and beyond, as manufacturers collaborate on technical specifications, researchers seek funding for a new clinical trial, and advocacy organizations form a community task force on lubricants.

The multi-sector partners who came together at the Global Consultation have important and complementary roles to play in improving the safety, availability, and usage of personal lubricants. Together, they will work to formulate robust industry guidelines and communicate clear and consistent public health messages.

OUTCOMES

The Global Consultation on Personal Lubricants was ambitious and productive, with participants developing recommendations and action plans for manufacturing, procuring, and distributing lubricants that are safer, more effective, accessible, and affordable for all.

3 ACTION PLANS



MANUFACTURERS

1. Form a working group to create standardized definitions for measurement, technical specifications, and formulas based on the recommendations of the meeting.
2. Develop and test products based on these agreed standards. The products will need to meet market needs, comply with international standards, and be suitable and safe for both vaginal and rectal use (a single product will avoid the problem of stigmatization).



RESEARCHERS

1. Conduct a clinical randomized trial with sex workers and men who have sex with men (MSM).
2. Fund more basic science on lubricants, including evaluating silicone lubricants in tissue models.
3. Conduct literature reviews, write opinion pieces, and advocate for funding research.



CIVIL SOCIETY

1. Form a Community Lubricant Task Force/ Advisory Group/ Reference Group.
2. Develop a survey/assessment for communities to gather information on lubricant use, preferences (e.g. packaging, viscosity, flavoured/scented), access, and what they know about lubricant safety (are they having reactions, irritation, etc.).
3. Develop correct, consistent messages about lubricant safety and how to market lubricant to communities. Focus on health promotion, disease prevention, and comfort, and ensure the messages are inclusive and non-stigmatizing – lubricants are an essential commodity and choice for everyone.

