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U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief



# Program implications of data on impact of VMAC on women

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# Overview of key findings discussed by S. Davis

- VMMC decreases HIV incidence in women
- VMMC decreases incidence of other STIs in women
- Male-to-female transmission
  - Definitive evidence for protection against male-to-female transmission unlikely to emerge
  - Uneven public knowledge about lack of evidence
  - Risk increased during healing
- Risk compensation not seen in men on population level
- VMMC protect female partners of HIV- men against HR-HPV, but not partners of HIV+ men



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# VMMC decreases HIV and other STI incidence in women: program implications

- VMMC communication campaigns need to add impact on HIV in women to their basic messages
- Data provides more rationale for using female VMMC champions
- Protection of partners from cervical cancer should be part of messaging to women, including those in long-term monogamous relationships
- VMMC programs should collaborate with NGOs, programs and agencies focused on women's health



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# No conclusive evidence VMMC decreases male-to-female HIV transmission: program implications

- Emphasizes need to make education, not only demand creation, a goal of outreach to women
- Education should reinforce that circumcision status is not a surrogate for HIV status
- Need to craft nuanced messages to convey both population-level HIV protection to women and need to continue individual self-protection



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# Increased male-to-female HIV transmission risk during healing: program implications

- Alongside demand creation, outreach to women should include education on supporting postoperative abstinence
  - Women should know how to support abstinence with partners, including describing risk of wound disruption
- Messaging should be pragmatic, as not all women are empowered to ensure abstinence: abstinence when possible, condom use where not



# No risk compensation in men: program implications

- Lack of population-level risk compensation in men
  - Reassuring that current messaging is effective
  - But experience shows positive behaviors can degrade over time, so need for continued program monitoring
    - Could incorporate sexual behavior and VMMC questions into AIDS Indicator Surveys, other national or sub-national surveys



# No protection from HR-HPV for partners of HIV+ men: program implications

- Presumably implies lack of protection against cervical cancer
- Demand creation efforts should not state or imply this as a benefit for HIV+ men
- Unknown if protection against other STIs is compromised for female partners of HIV+ men



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# Summary

- New data on benefits of VMMC for women must lead to changes in community and individual demand creation and education
  - Population-level protection for women is an important new **finding** that should be incorporated in messaging
  - Importance of careful message design to communicate this simultaneously with unchanged need for personal self-protection measures
  - Education, not only demand creation, is a crucial goal of outreach to women
- Explore opportunities to collaborate with programs/NGOs/etc. focused on women's health