

Condom promotion in Uganda May Increase HIV risk, study shows

Raises "uncomfortable questions" about current orthodoxy in HIV prevention

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A major British AIDS information website, aidsmap.com, in a Sept. 14 article by Keith Alcorn, reports on the startling findings of a study on the distribution and promotion of condoms in Uganda. However, the findings would not be considered startling to those who have opposed the flooding of Africa with condoms as a supposed solution to AIDS.

The study, *Increasing condom use without reducing HIV risk: results of a controlled community trial in Uganda*, by Kajubi P et al., was originally published in the September 1st edition of the Baltimore-based *Journal of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndromes*.

[Aidsmap.com](http://aidsmap.com)'s Alcorn reports the study found that, while promotion of condoms to an intervention group did result in much higher usage or "uptake" of condoms, the men in that group also "went on to have a larger number of sexual partners and were somewhat less likely to use condoms with casual sex partners than the control group." Alcorn also notes that "This improvement in uptake actually appeared to be associated with an increase in behaviour that may paradoxically increase the rate of HIV transmission in sexual networks with high levels of partner change".

In other words, increased condom promotion and availability was shown to increase the frequency and risk of sexual activity even though condoms were used more often than before the study began.

"The study compared two groups recruited from poor urban communities in Kampala", notes Alcorn. "It was designed to overcome barriers to condom access and a lack of skills in condom use identified in Uganda. The authors note that improved availability of condoms in Uganda has had only a modest effect on condom uptake."

Alcorn concludes that "The findings are unlikely to be welcomed by those who argue that the Ugandan government is deliberately turning its back on condom promotion in order to please US funders and evangelical Christians, and raise uncomfortable questions about the evidence base that informs the current international orthodoxy in HIV prevention".

Finally Alcorn adds more fuel to the consternation likely to be experienced by condom advocates by reporting that "a 2004 Cambridge University study published in the journal *Science* found that a reduction in sexual partners and later age of sexual debut were the factors responsible for a reduction in HIV incidence in Uganda, not condom use." He also adds, "a study by the Columbia University expert Maria Wawer, presented at the Twelfth Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in February 2005, found that in Uganda's Rakai district increased condom uptake had nothing to do with the reduction in HIV prevalence, and that reductions in incidence pre-dated the promotion of condoms by Uganda's government."

See the full aidsmap.com report at

<http://www.aidsmap.com/en/news/4E172283-15D5-446A-8CF7-97BCD5B7C8C1.asp>