



African women respond to the news of the positive opinion by the European Medicines Agency on the Dapivirine vaginal ring.

“The journey to a Microbicide was personal,” HIV advocates.

For Immediate release 24th July 2020 - The International Community of women living with HIV (IWEA), Advocates for the prevention of HIV in Africa (APHA) and Emthonjeni joins the rest of the world to welcome with excitement the great news of “the positive opinion by the European Medicines Agency (EMA) on the dapivirine vaginal ring for use by cisgender women ages 18 and older to reduce their risk of HIV-1 infection. This is exciting news! After 16 years of research – the Dapivirine Ring could give African women their first long-acting HIV prevention option!

We congratulate the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM), the ardent women and girls that participated in the study and all those who have worked tirelessly to get to this stage.

“Women continue to carry the HIV burden, with new HIV infections continuing to be registered among adolescent girls and young women and Sub Saharan Africa leading; yet with no female controlled options – the Dapivirine vaginal ring could bring a smile to adolescent girls and young women in Africa ,” Azizuyo Brenda Facy – a young woman at ICWEA.

This is a great achievement for those alive and departed indeed as Rapheal Yvette says, *“The News is personal I remember how sad it was to receive the news that the Microbicide gel did not work, I remember organising that call with Johanna Ncala and Prudence Mabele . Today is a different day and the many women and supporters of what was just a dream back then. Sisonke kule ring! Our daughters have a shot at an HIV free future. This is a win for women globally and the work now starts to get our governments to approve it and make it available. Amandlaa!!!!!!”*

“Today, we have another reason to commit to continue what we started, to continue advocating and giving a voice to why prevention and options and choices for women in all our diversity is important. We now must go to our governments in Sub Saharan Africa and make them know how important it is to prioritise prevention for women in all our diversity in Africa”, says Lillian Mworeko, an HIV advocate from ICWEA who has been at the forefront of advocating for this ring at national, regional and global levels.

Another activist, who has worked on microbicides research for 12 years, Nono Eland from local NPO Emthonjeni, is reflective about the timing of the news,

“This news could not have come at a better time. We continue being faced with extreme forms of violence against women and girls and femicide in South Africa exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown. Women need HIV prevention options that they can control urgently. We have come a long way and survived immense backlash. We are proud to have made sure that women lead the research agenda, ensured the rights of trial participants. It is like I am waking up from a dream. Well it is a dream come true for many women! We look forward to our government following suit and making sure that every woman who needs the ring gets it. Prevention is our priority and we will make sure women get the Ring.”

We now have a duty to hold our leaders accountable to ensure they commit political and avail funding in order to make the dapivirine ring available. Women have waited for long and can’t wait any longer.

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