

Assessing Fitted Condoms as a Sexual Health Intervention in Cape Town, South Africa

A triphasic research investigation sponsored by:

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TheyFit Condoms

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Exploring Custom-Fitted Condoms as a Sexual Health Intervention in Cape Town, South Africa

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Executive Summary

- * Mixed methods study conducted by graduate students from Emory University (Atlanta, GA, USA) during June-August 2013 in Cape Town, South Africa (in collaboration with HSRC)
- * Explored the demand for & feasibility of the incorporation of custom-fitted male condoms into current sexual health interventions
 - * **Survey** of 133 heterosexual men to explore experiences and attitudes regarding standard condoms & interest in non-standard sized condoms
 - * **In-depth interviews** with 6 condom distribution and education staff at clinics and sexual health organizations to determine the feasibility of incorporating custom-fitted condoms into existing interventions and practices
 - * **In-depth interviews** with 20 sex workers to examine interest in custom fitted condoms

Survey Results: Standard Male Condom Experience

- * 67% of participants reported ever having *at least* one problem with condom fit or function
- * 22% of participants reported that male condoms did not appropriately fit their penile length
- * 31% of participants reported that male condoms did not appropriately fit their penile girth
- * 53% had a condom break during sex
- * 41% had a condom slip off during sex

Survey Results: Standard male condom use

- * 32% reported not using a condom at last sexual encounter
- * Why? Possible explanations respondents selected from a list-
 - * Men had a perceived reduction of sexual pleasure (28%)
 - * Men were currently in a safe, monogamous relationship (26%)
 - * Men were too embarrassed to acquire condoms (20%)

Survey Results: Standard Male Condom Attitudes

- * Why do men use condoms?
 - * Prevent HIV/STI infection (94%)
 - * Precaution against HIV/STI transmission (94%)
 - * Avoidance of pregnancy (84%)
- * What don't men like about standard condoms?
 - * Disliked feeling of condoms (35%)
 - * Too embarrassed to use free standard fit condoms (26%)

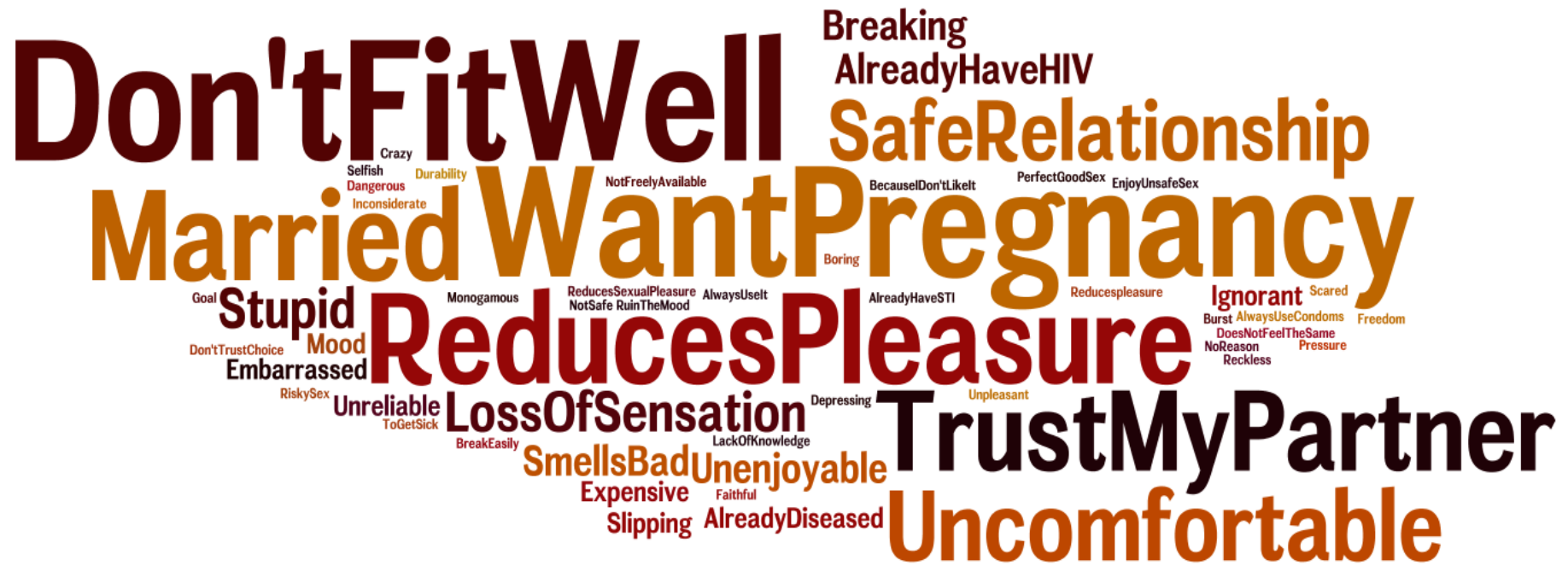
Survey Results: Fitted Male Condom Attitudes

- * There is a high demand for fitted male condoms
 - * Men, regardless of education level, race, religion or income, prefer condoms to come in more sizes (77%)
 - * Men reported they would be more likely to use condoms if they were custom fit
- * **Could provision of fitted condoms lead to increases in condom use?**

We asked men in this clinic:
How would you improve male condoms?



We asked men in this clinic:
Why do you think men don't use male condoms?



Key Informant Interview Results 1

- * Clinics kept between 6,000 and 60,000 condoms in stock
- * Government-issued standard-sized condoms were available at all sites and the distribution system was easy to use and quick to restock
- * Mixed opinions about the government issued *Choice* condoms
- * Grant funded, population specific, and subsidized condoms were seen as more desirable for condom users but the availability of these condoms was sporadic
- * All clinics and sexual health organizations had condoms available for free in public areas
- * All clinics and sexual health organizations had educational outreach on correct condom use

Key Informant Interview Results 2

- * Limited availability of space for men to perform penile measurements in clinics
- * Interest in fitted condoms dependent on changes to the current fitted sizing system (95 condom sizes), with a need to:
 - * Have a small number of different sizes
 - * A well-organized supply chain
 - * Affordable pricing
 - * Long-term supply availability
- * *“There are free condoms available even though [...] it's the Choice condom with the no choice” – Staff member government clinic*

In-depth Interview Results

- * Substantial number of sex workers interviewed experienced condom failure
- * Mixed results about penile measurements:
 - * Half indicated that penile measurement would be better suited for clients to conduct in private
 - * Half responded that their clients would find it sexy to have their penises measured before sex.
- * 16 out of 20 sex workers indicated they thought that if clients better fitting condom, client willingness to reconsider condom use would increase
- * Most sex workers indicated that 95 sizes of condoms would be unmanageable
- * Conversely, a number of participants indicated that condoms in limited size variations (i.e. small, medium, large) would be easier to manage with their clients.
- * Size alone might not be sufficient to encourage increased condom use
 - * Color, flavor, texture
 - * Aversion to government-branded condoms.

Key Findings

- * Among heterosexual men,
 - * 1/3rd of men reported not using a condom at last sex
 - * 2/3rd of men stated having experienced condom fit problems (including slippage and breakage)
 - * 3/4th of men claimed would be more likely to use condoms if they were custom-fitted
- * According to in-depth interviews with staff,
 - * Staff have an interest in greater condom size variety with a preference of smaller number of different sizes, a well-organized supply chain, affordable pricing and long-term supply availability
- * Among sex workers,
 - * Majority believed that availability of more condom sizes would improve clients' willingness to use condoms
 - * Having a select number of sizes (sm, med, lg) would be most beneficial and feasible
 - * Size of condom alone will not encourage increased condom use
 - * Clients prefer colored, flavored and textured condoms

Implications

- * There is a substantial interest in an increased array of condom sizes
- * Important considerations regarding feasibility/logistics of introducing custom-fit condoms as a sexual health intervention

Developing and Assessing a Fitted Condom Sizing System in Cape Town, South Africa

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Research aims based on findings from previous project

Last year's finding

- * There is a substantial interest in an increased array of condom sizes
- * Logistics of introducing custom-fit condoms as a sexual health intervention
- * Feasibility of introducing custom-fit condoms as a sexual health intervention

This year's aim

- * Determine an appropriate number of sizes to make available
- * Establish condom preferences, including the idea of “premiumness”
- * Create a visual/verbal fitted condom sizing system
- * Explore how couples talk about contraception and abortion
- * Determine current research implementation channels

Focus Groups Goals

- * Create a visual/verbal fitted condom sizing system
- * Explore what factors are associated with the perception of “premium-ness” of condoms
- * 3 rounds of 3 focus groups at health clinics and other non-clinical sites*:
 - * Round 1: Develop the visual based sizing system
 - * Explore 3 non-standard condoms (flavored, colored, textured) recently disseminated by the government and compare to a standard condom (Choice)
 - * Round 2: Develop the verbal based sizing system
 - * Explore 4 incrementally priced condoms (blinded), discuss their differences, then reveal prices, and have another open discussion
 - * Round 3: Assess and compare the visual and verbal based sizing systems
 - * Explore how many sizes of fitted condoms would be appropriate; explore different sizes of condoms and discuss feasibility

Baseline Survey Goals

- * Establish baseline information surrounding the needs of condom-users
- * Establish men and women's initial preference for one condom sizing system over the other
- * Survey 300 men and women at health clinics and other non-clinical sites*
 - * Time space sampling
 - * Administer survey via iPads

In-Depth Interview Goals

- * Explore what factors are associated with the perception of “premium-ness” of condoms
- * Explore how clinics come to use condom research to develop and implement sexual health interventions to increase condom use
- * Interview 25 key informants that play a role in the development of condom promotion programs (program intervention designers, health providers, HSRC employees, policy makers etc.)