

Working collaboratively, the International Rectal Microbicide Working Group and the Global Campaign for Microbicides have been investigating the claims of a lubricant manufacturer in the United Kingdom called Kirklees Medical Limited. The company has been making explicit claims on their website regarding the ability of its products to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted HIV infection with no proof of safety or efficacy. In a December 18, 2006 e-mail to IRMWG from Christiaan Hohenzollern of Kirklees Medical, Mr. Hohenzollern stated that a Kirklees lubricant “is less than 50% effective against HIV in actual use between partners although it performed exceptionally well against other STIs”.

GCM has maintained an Unproven Product Claims Watch for several years to raise public awareness of products that are being presented to the public (without substantiating evidence) as effective microbicides and to advocate for the removal of such products from the market wherever possible. Knowing this, IRMWG referred this information about Kirklees to GCM and we have been working together on it for the last ten months; urging Kirklees to either provide us with peer-reviewed scientific data supporting its anti-HIV/anti-STI claims or to cease making them. The Terrence Higgins Trust, as a UK-based member of both the GCM and IRMWG, has taken the lead on generating this dialog.

Kirklees has not complied with either of these two requests. They have not provided data demonstrating either (1) anti-HIV efficacy in vivo or (2) that long-term use of the product is safe over time (i.e. does not damage either vaginal or rectal epithelia in any way that might increase HIV risk).