



## **IRMA Releases New Publication *Menos Silencio, Más Ciencia***

*Translated Document to Enhance Rectal Microbicide Advocacy in the Spanish-Speaking World*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Mexico City, Mexico – International Rectal Microbicide Advocates (IRMA) released *Menos Silencio, Más Ciencia* in Mexico City today at a presentation preceding the 17<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference.

This Spanish language version of IRMA’s February 2008 publication *Less Silence, More Science* serves as an authoritative reference on recent developments and current efforts in rectal microbicide research. The groundbreaking report describes global challenges, advocacy goals, and key strategies to advance scientific discovery on topical rectal products which confer protection against HIV transmission. As HIV incidence and prevalence increase globally, this document aims to promote the research and development of rectal microbicides among the more than 300 million native Spanish speakers worldwide.

As indicated by the publication’s title, anal intercourse remains largely stigmatized, even in medical and scientific research surrounding HIV prevention and care. This silence results in the reduction of critical discussion and study on the topic. Socio-cultural taboos surrounding anal sex restrict scientific advancements in many places, and Latin America the Caribbean and South America are no exception.

“Unprotected anal intercourse, which is far more prevalent than official statistics might suggest, is a significant driver in the AIDS epidemic among both men and women around the world,” said Jim Pickett, IRMA chair and Advocacy Director at the AIDS Foundation of Chicago. “Unfortunately, this fact is obscured by debilitating silence and stigma, proving time and again the old adage that silence equals death.”

Globally, most anal intercourse is unprotected. Anal sex among gay men and other men who have sex with men (MSM), as well as between women and men, is recognized more and more as an important factor in the HIV pandemic in Latin America, the Caribbean, and South America, as well as among Latinos in the United States.

Currently in development, rectal microbicides are products that could be available in the form of a lubricant, gel, douche or enema. They may be used to reduce a person's risk for HIV infection from unprotected anal intercourse or provide additional protection if condoms are used.

"We applaud the ongoing efforts around the world to develop safe and effective vaginal microbicides," said Jerome Galea, chair of IRMA-ALC (América Latina y el Caribe). "But at the same time we must not neglect the quest for equally safe and effective rectal microbicides. We know that people are engaging in anal intercourse, even though it's seldom discussed. The need for a rectal microbicide is as important as the need for a vaginal microbicide."

The translation of this landmark document is largely due to the efforts of IRMA-ALC. IRMA's new regional "sister" site based in Lima, Peru. IRMA-ALC focuses attention on rectal microbicide advocacy and research efforts in Latin America, the Caribbean and South America.

Researchers in Peru are conducting the first PrEP (pre-exposure prophylaxis) studies in MSM and coordinating with groups in Ecuador and Brazil who are also participating in the investigation. IRMA-ALC's vision is to be the principal promoters of rectal microbicide research in the region.

"In all of Latin America and the Caribbean, there are only two microbicide clinical trials underway, one in the Dominican Republic and the other in Puerto Rico; both are for vaginal products," said Galea. "These studies represent important steps in microbicide research. However, in much of Latin America, HIV is transmitted by unprotected anal intercourse. We must press forward with advocacy and research to bring safe, effective and acceptable rectal microbicides to the men and women who need them."

In an effort to transcend cultural and language barriers, IRMA-ALC aims to firmly place rectal microbicide research on the Latin American /Caribbean map by disseminating information in Spanish.

Copies of *Menos Silencio, Más Ciencia* were distributed during a pre-conference workshop titled *Making Anal Sex Safer for MSM in the Developing World*, and the attendants were the first in the world to receive the publication. The IRMA workshop featured speakers from Peru, Nigeria, Malaysia, and the United States who further underscored the need for a global commitment to rectal microbicide development.

To read the report in Spanish, visit: [www.rectalmicrobicides.org](http://www.rectalmicrobicides.org) beginning August 1, 2008.

International Rectal Microbicides Advocates is a global network of more than 600 advocates, policy-makers and leading scientists from 50 countries on six continents forging a robust rectal microbicide research and development agenda. AIDS Foundation of Chicago, a leading HIV/AIDS organization in the United States, is the group's secretariat, providing coordination and support for IRMA.

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