



Advocacy to accelerate ethical research & global delivery of AIDS vaccines

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE, December 13, 2006

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AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition Calls for Strategic Leadership in the Implementation of Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention

New York, NY, December 13, 2006 – Mitchell Warren, Executive Director of the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC) today issued the following statement regarding the Data Safety Monitoring Board (DSMB) decision to stop two NIH-sponsored trials – one in Kenya and one in Uganda – on male circumcision for evidence of efficacy in HIV prevention:

“The news today that two additional trials examining male circumcision to reduce the risk of HIV infection have been halted early due to positive results is a milestone in the history of the AIDS epidemic. These data build on earlier results from a South African male circumcision study released in 2005 that showed male circumcision helps protect men from HIV infection.

“The benefits of this new prevention strategy will only be realized if male circumcision is included as a part of a larger package of prevention services. Advocates, activists, governments and public health agencies must act now to address critical issues related to the implementation and roll-out. Ensuring male circumcision becomes an effective AIDS prevention strategy must mean access to safe, sterile, confidential procedures accompanied by clear, culturally-appropriate education, counseling and information for both men and women.

“If we fail to roll out male circumcision in this context, the risks are great. Unlike other HIV risk reduction strategies, male circumcision is a surgical procedure. It requires trained personnel, sterile instruments, and adequate supplies of items like gauze and bandages. In the developing world, these resources are often in short supply, and, in their absence, the procedure can lead to infections and even death. We must work now to scale-up these resources in countries where HIV and AIDS have the greatest impact.

“Implementation of male circumcision must be accompanied with appropriate HIV testing, risk-reduction counseling and condom provision. Women cannot be overlooked, since data is still pending from an on-going companion study in Uganda on whether male circumcision protects the female partners of circumcised, HIV-infected men.

“Scaling up male circumcision can have a dramatic impact, but it is not a silver bullet. We must simultaneously continue to pursue other prevention technologies, including vaginal and rectal microbicides, cervical barriers and preventive HIV vaccines. A wide array of prevention and treatment options is essential in the fight against AIDS, and AVAC firmly believes that a safe and effective vaccine remains the best possible option for ending the epidemic.”

About AVAC: Founded in 1995, the AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition (AVAC) is a non-profit, community- and consumer-based organization that uses public education, policy analysis, advocacy and community mobilization to accelerate the ethical development and global delivery of AIDS vaccines and other prevention options. AVAC’s report on anticipating and understanding results of the male circumcision trials is available at www.avac.org.

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