

New Analysis on Hormonal Contraception and HIV: WHO and others must act

In July, at the International AIDS Conference in Durban, the fog of confusion surrounding hormonal contraception and risk of HIV lifted—just a bit. At an early morning satellite session sponsored by the World Health Organization, advocates heard the conclusions from the latest systematic review of studies that gathered observational data on contraceptive method use and HIV risk. The two previous systematic reviews concluded that available high-quality data point to uncertainty. The data presented at Durban were subsequently published in early August as *AVAC Report* went to press. The available data on the question of whether DMPA (Depo-Provera) increases HIV risk in HIV-negative women still have limitations—largely because they come from trials that weren’t designed to answer that specific question. However, a presentation in Durban noted that the data are “increasingly concerning” regarding DMPA and its impact on HIV acquisition risk. The presentation also suggested an estimate of this impact—a 20 to 60 percent increase in risk of HIV acquisition. WHO has indicated that it will share the findings with the committee that determines whether or not to convene a full guidelines review process. AVAC looks to WHO, country policy makers, advocates and leaders of the ongoing ECHO trial to act on the new data swiftly and with transparency.