IMMUNOCONTRACEPTION

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World Health Organization
Geneva, Switzerland
IMMUNOCONTRACEPTION

General issues

Biomedical issues
IMMUNOCONTRACEPTION

General issues
What is immunocontraception?
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The use of the body’s natural immune defence mechanisms to provide protection against an unplanned pregnancy.

It requires the production of a controlled, time-limited and non-pathogenic immune response to components of the reproductive process.
Who would be able to use immunocontraception?
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Intended for the use of women and men, throughout their reproductive lives, for them to:

- **delay** or postpone first pregnancies;
- **space** pregnancies at intervals beneficial to the health of the mother and her infants;
- provide comparatively **long-lasting but not permanent** protection on the attainment of the desired family size.
Why are immunocontraceptives being developed?
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Reasons for development

To provide an additional option to current or potential users of family planning methods and services

To address an unmet need in reproductive health
# CURRENT GLOBAL ESTIMATES OF UNMET REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH NEEDS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category of unmet reproductive health need</th>
<th>Millions (world wide)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couples with unmet family planning needs</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infertile couples</td>
<td>60-80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsafe abortions</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal deaths</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incidence of maternal morbidity</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perinatal mortality</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infants with low weight at birth</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant deaths</td>
<td>8.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative total of HIV infections by the year 2000</td>
<td>30-40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumulative total of AIDS cases by the year 2000</td>
<td>12-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curable sexually transmitted diseases (new cases)</td>
<td>298</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female genital mutilation *</td>
<td>85-110</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONTRACEPTIVE USE AND UNMET NEED

- Women of reproductive age: 1300 million
- Users of modern methods: 430 million
- Users of traditional methods: 70 million
- Users but dissatisfied: 200 million
- Non-users but sexually active: 120 million
- Non-users but need unknown: 480 million

Needs met: c. 500 million
Needs unmet: c. 700 million
What are the advantages of immunocontraceptives?
ADVANTAGES OF IMMUNOCOCONTRACEPTIVES

• lack of endocrine or metabolic side-effects;
• do not require insertion of an implant or device;
• provide long term but not permanent protection;
• do not require storage or disposal by the user;
• use is independent of coitus;
• permit confidentiality of use;
• low annual cost to users and services.
What are the disadvantages of immunocontraceptives?
DISADVANTAGES OF IMMUNOCONTRACEPTIVES

• delay between administration and attainment of effective immunity;

• individual variations in immune responses and, therefore, in level and duration of effectiveness;

• cannot be ‘turned off’ on demand;

• not a barrier to sexually-transmitted infections;

• alleged abuse potential.
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Biomedical issues
Where and how would immunocontraceptives work?
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Possible points of intervention

Hypothalamus - GnRH

Pituitary - FSH and LH

Gonads - progesterone, estrogen and testosterone

Gametes - ovum and sperm

Pre-embryo - structural and endocrine components
What is the current status of development of prototype immunocontraceptives?
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GnRH immunocontraceptive

Various veterinary trials to control feral animal populations and for immunological castration

Clinical trial conducted in postpartum women to prolong anovulation

Clinical trial conducted in men with prostatic cancer

Clinical trial underway in normal men
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FSH immunocontraceptive

Phase I clinical trial conducted in normal men to assess immunogenicity and to assess effect on spermatogenesis

Prototype preparation found to be only weakly immunogenic, some reduction in sperm numbers and motility but no significant effect on semen parameters
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**Steroid immunocontraceptives**

Several studies carried out in laboratory animals but no known clinical trials conducted to date

**Gamete immunocontraceptives**

Several studies carried out in laboratory animals but, again, no known clinical trials conducted to date
hCG immunocontraceptive

Several types and formulations of hCG-based immunocontraceptives are being studied extensively in preclinical studies and clinical trials, completed and planned, sponsored by:

National Institute of Immunology, Delhi, India
Population Council, New York, USA
World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland
Composition: heterospecies dimer of beta-hCG:alpha-oLH, tetanus toxoid, diphtheria toxoid, LPS, alum

Current status: Phase I clinical trial completed
Phase II clinical trial completed
Phase III clinical trial pending long-term safety studies
HCG IMMUNOCONTRACEPTIVE

Population Council, New York, USA

Composition:
beta-hCG, tetanus toxoid, alum

Current status:
Phase I clinical trial completed
Phase II clinical trial planned
HCG IMMUNOCONTRACEPTIVE

World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland

Composition:
CTP-beta-hCG, diphtheria toxoid, muramyl dipeptide, water-in-oil emulsion vehicle

Current status:
Phase I clinical trial completed
Phase II clinical trial awaiting reformulation of preparation
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Important points to remember!
**IMPORTANT AND FUNDAMENTAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ANTI-DISEASE VACCINES AND IMMUNOCONTRACEPTIVES**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ANTI-DISEASE VACCINES</th>
<th>IMMUNOCONTRACEPTIVES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• designed to provide long-term, ideally life-long, protection against life-threatening or debilitating diseases;</td>
<td>• designed to provide long-term but not permanent protection against unplanned pregnancy;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• often the only method of protection against such diseases;</td>
<td>• other methods of birth control available;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• directed against an immunologically foreign pathogen;</td>
<td>• directed against a non-pathogenic cell or hormone;</td>
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<tr>
<td>• vaccine-induced immunity often boosted by sub-clinical infection or exposure to the pathogen.</td>
<td>• vaccine-induced immunity not boosted by re-exposure to the target antigen or by pregnancy.</td>
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FUTURE RESEARCH NEEDS AND ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

• final product development;
• assessment of safety of long-term use;
• assessment of acceptability of the approach;
• definition of mechanism(s) of action;
• reversal of contraceptive effect on demand;
• clarification and debate of socio-political issues.
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The overall objective:

to increase the choice of family planning methods available to individuals and couples world wide