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**CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNT FROM HIV VACCINE TRIALS
RECRUITMENT IN UGANDA**

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A phase I HIV vaccine trial evaluating the NIH Vaccine Research Center multiclade DNA vaccine, VRC-HIVDNA 009-00-VP was conducted by the US Military HIV Research Program and Makerere University-Walter Reed Project in Kampala, Uganda. Recruitment began in late 2004 and approaches included information seminars for community leaders, pre-existing groups and later the general public. The study was publicized through newspaper and radio advertisements, Internet, brochures, and banners.

Seminars were conducted for organized groups (10) and at the MUWRP clinic (9). Attendance at seminars ranged from 40-125 with about equal male/female representation. Those participants who eventually enrolled in the study heard about the trial through friends (11), seminars (9), radio announcements (7), newspaper (2), poster/banner (2) and Internet (1).

Several challenges were encountered during recruitment. Although women were present for screening, few were eventually enrolled. Some people mistook the trial for a free HIV testing opportunity.

Misunderstanding and suspicion of research and foreign stakeholders were common. Poorly understood concepts included origin of HIV, vaccine design, how vaccines work, efficacy determination, use of placebos, and rationale for enrolling healthy HIV negative people. Fear of stigmatization due to false-positive tests and questions on compensation also arose.

Lessons learnt include necessity of ongoing community education. Liaison with community and opinion leaders is vital. Reasons for low participation of women in trials need further research. An active Community Advisory Board can help bridge gaps with the community, and help researchers review and simplify recruitment and informed consent documents. Government should spearhead continuous HIV vaccine trials advocacy and education activities.

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THEME

Recruitment

SUGGESTED TOPICS

1st Choice Factors affecting trial enrolment and retention

2nd Choice Development of international cohorts