

June 10, 2009

Caucus on New and Underused Reproductive Health Technologies

The Caucus is a community of practice comprising approximately 25 members of the larger Reproductive Health Supplies Coalition (RHSC) (participant list attached). The Caucus currently is chaired by Jane Hutchings, PATH, and all the participants are members of diverse working groups within the RHSC.

The purposes of the Caucus are to:

- Broaden the discussion within the RHSC of projects that meet users' needs and have desirable effects on reproductive health, but are not well integrated into the public or commercial sectors globally.
- Support efforts within the working groups that relate to new and underused RH supplies.
- Through the activities above, contribute to country-level efforts to achieve Millennium Development Goal 5, by both supporting work to achieve universal access to RH services and products and by facilitating their use to reduce maternal mortality and morbidity.

The Caucus has met twice in conjunction with the larger RHSC Membership Meeting, first in Brussels in 2008, and again in London in 2009. Each meeting lasted for approximately two to three hours and was attended by between 10 and 15 participants.

The results from the Brussels 2008 Caucus meeting included the following:

- The agreement to prepare nine briefs, each between two to three pages in length, describing the following methods or products: CycleBeads, diaphragms, emergency contraception (levonorgestrel or LNG), female condom, HPV vaccine, LNG-releasing intrauterine system, medical abortion (mifepristone/misoprostol), manual vacuum aspiration, and the progesterone-only vaginal ring. Each of these products was profiled in terms of its indications for use and information about commercial sources.
- Each of these briefs underwent peer review.
- The briefs were shared with the RHSC Executive Committee.
- The RHSC has developed a [website](#) with information about the Caucus, which includes a link to the briefs on the PATH website, enabling access to the information by members and others outside of the Coalition.

The results from the London 2009 Caucus meeting included the following next steps:

- Agreement to prepare a short brief that would make the case for including new technologies in the RHSC's work. (John Townsend)
- Adding new contraceptive products to the series of briefs, including implants (Aida Cancel), injectables (Jane Hutchings) and other contraceptive rings (John Townsend, pending regulatory approval of new devices).

- There also was discussion about the broader array of maternal health products, including treatments for preeclampsia/eclampsia, post-partum hemorrhage, and other products for emergency obstetric care.
 - In a follow up conversation, Jane Hutchings and John Townsend identified the relationship of the Coalition with these non-contraceptive supplies as an issue that the Caucus could, potentially, frame and move forward.
 - Given this broader strategic focus, John will move forward with the preparation of an Innovation Fund proposal. Any one who is interested in partnering on this effort should contact John.
 - The proposal would be submitted in the spring of 2010; prior to that time, Jane will seek clarification as to whether the Caucus can pursue a submission or whether we need to link with a Working Group.
- Assess interest in and feasibility of adding tools for forecasting the potential demand for selected new and underused methods, building on the work already done by members of the Caucus. (Victoria Jennings)
- Coordinate with the working group at WHO on the Essential Reproductive Health Medicines List to ensure that there is coherence between WHO and the RHSC related to new and underused methods. (Jane Hutchings, noting that not all new and underused methods will fall within the broad essential medicines scope—which favors safe, effective, and low-cost products and seeks to avoid redundancy [e.g., multiple formulations of combined pills]).
- Share guidance on the introduction strategies for new and underused methods, including tested approaches and challenges. Attached are links to the [WHO Strategic Approach](#) to contraceptive introduction and PATH's [Product Introduction Framework](#). Please forward other approaches and tools you think would be of interest. We will discuss with John Skibiak at the RHSC Secretariat how such information can be shared through the RHSC website. (Jane Hutchings)

Overall, the group decided to work toward posting Caucus materials on the RHSC website or another website accessible to RHSC members and further integrate this effort with the working groups to advance the goals of the RHSC.

We agree to share these notes with members of the Caucus and get feedback on the timelines for each of the specific tasks proposed. The Caucus agreed to meet again during the 2010 RHSC Membership Meeting.