

Joint Statement

Congressman (Ret.) Tom Coburn, M.D.
Congressman Dave Weldon, M.D.
Physicians Consortium
Catholic Medical Association

It is time for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to start telling the whole truth about condoms!

The above named groups, representing more than 10,000 physicians and medical professionals, are gathered in Washington, D.C., today, July 24, 2001, to testify to a health crisis that has devastated our nation for the last 20 years.

The epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) has affected millions of people in America and around the world. As practicing physicians, we see the pain and suffering the STD epidemic has inflicted on individuals and families, and we have been attempting for many years to persuade the public health community that the policy of STD prevention by condom use cannot succeed.

We believe the failure of public health efforts to prevent the STD epidemic in America is related to the CDC's "safe sex" promotion and its attempt to withhold from the American people the truth of condom ineffectiveness.

The organizations and individuals concurring with this statement have extensive evidence that the CDC has systematically hidden and misrepresented vital medical information regarding the ineffectiveness of condoms to prevent the transmission of STDs. The CDC's refusal to acknowledge clinical research has contributed to the massive STD epidemic.

We believe that the CDC may be in direct and intentional violation of a federal law (P.L. 106- 554), passed last year, that requires the CDC (and other federal agencies) to communicate medically accurate information to the public and to enforce the use of medically accurate information by contractors, grantees and sub-grantees.

On Friday, July 20, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services released an official government document detailing the research on condom effectiveness. This document supports our contention that condoms offer extremely limited benefit to our patients.

Specifically, the government document, based on all available peer-reviewed clinical research, details the following facts about condom effectiveness:

STD	Incidence	Prevalence	Condom Effectiveness
HIV	40,000	900,000	Relative risk = .15
Gonorrhea	650,000	NA	Women - No clinical proof of effectiveness Men - Some effectiveness
Chlamydia	3 million	2 million	No clinical proof of effectiveness
Trichomoniasis	5 million	NA	No clinical proof of effectiveness
Syphilis	70,000	NA	No clinical proof of effectiveness
Genital Herpes	500,000	45 million	No clinical proof of effectiveness

Human Papillomavirus (HPV)	5.5 million	20 million	No clinical proof of effectiveness
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Other reputable medical organizations are also on record as saying that condoms do not protect against all STDs, especially against HPV. In fact, Dr. Richard D. Klausner, Director of the National Cancer Institute, concluded that, "additional research efforts by NCI on the effectiveness of condoms in preventing HPV transmission are not warranted."

The CDC has had full knowledge of this medical literature for many years and has chosen not to release this information to the American public.

We believe that the CDC made numerous attempts to delay, and even alter, the NIH document on condom effectiveness. Specifically, the CDC demanded the inclusion of an unproven and theoretical model into the document, which originally was to have included only empirical, peer-reviewed data. The addition of this hypothetical model not only weakens the scientific basis of the NIH document as originally conceived, but adds unwarranted confusion and misinformation to what otherwise is a clear-cut repudiation of condom effectiveness. By its insistence to include the hypothetical model, the CDC further demonstrates its apparent attempt to withhold information that women need to protect themselves from STDs.

While the CDC's model is purely hypothetical, our patients are not. They are real people with real medical conditions who need real information, real compassion and real treatment. There is nothing theoretical about the cases of STDs we see in our offices. The data in the NIH document, based on real people living real lives, show little or no evidence of condom protectiveness against real STDs.

Our greatest concern is for the millions of our patients and their families who have suffered from this policy of cover-up and deception. The CDC has promoted condom-use programs that have been used to educate an entire generation. Because they believe condoms would protect them during intercourse, millions of women in our country now suffer from the ravages of diseases, including pelvic infections, infertility and cervical cancer.

We physicians, who have depended upon the CDC to develop sound public health policy to protect the health and well being of our patients, are appalled at public health officials who are withholding the very information we need to educate and care for our patients.

It falls upon practicing physicians, not the CDC, the help pick up the pieces in the lives of millions of young women who contract painful, even deadly, STDs. Everyday we see the hopes and dreams, as well as the physical and emotional health, of our patients robbed by STDs. We demand more from the CDC, because we demand better for our patients.

There is a health model that completely protects against all STDs; it is abstinence until marriage with an uninfected partner and monogamy thereafter. If we, as a medical community, are really serious about the STD epidemic, this is the message we must begin sending to our young people. But we need the CDC's help to do so.

We plead with the CDC to stop using theoretical models that have no basis in actual clinical research, to start telling the truth and to stop breaking the law. Our patients deserve no less.

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