

Ibis Newsletter

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Ibis and the University of Texas Conduct Study of Oral Contraceptive Use in the El Paso Ciudad Juarez Border Region

Together with colleagues at the University of Texas at Austin and El Paso, Ibis completed the fieldwork on the first part of this NIH-funded study examining oral contraceptive use in the US-Mexico border region. In Mexico, birth control pills are available in pharmacies without a prescription, and women in the US who live near the border frequently buy their pills in Mexico over-the-counter. The study has several components that take advantage of this natural experiment as a way of better understanding how over-the-counter access could work in the US.

For the first part of the study, women were asked to use a simple checklist to self-screen for contraindications to oral contraceptive use. This self-screen was then compared to a nurse practitioner's "gold standard" evaluation to determine the accuracy of the self-administered checklist. Over 1,300 women participated in the study, which also collected information about family planning use and mis-

conceptions about hormonal contraception. The researchers are currently cleaning the data set and beginning analysis, which should be completed in the coming months.



The next part of the study will involve recruiting 1,000 oral contraceptive users in El Paso: 500 who obtain their pills in clinics in El Paso and 500 who obtain their pills in pharmacies in Mexico. Women will undergo four interviews over the course of nine months that will measure pill continuation, satisfaction and women's motivation behind obtaining pills in a given way. The researchers recently met in El Paso to finalize the initial study instruments and to develop a plan to recruit participants.

Dan Grossman is the Co-Principal Investigator for this project from Ibis and can be contacted at dgrossman@ibisreproductivehealth.org with any questions. This study will continue through June 2010.

Abortion and Reproductive Health Education and Training

Our efforts to strengthen the reproductive health content of health professional education and training continued apace in 2006. In April, we published a paper in *Contraception* dedicated to the inclusion of abortion in advanced practice clinician education and training. A joint project with the National Abortion Federation and the Abortion Access Project, our study found striking deficiencies in both didactic and clinical exposure to abortion care in nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and certified nurse midwifery programs. Other highlights of our curricular research include ongoing studies evaluating the reproductive health content of nursing education and training in Massachusetts and clinical education in both allopathic and osteopathic medical schools the US. We have also continued our efforts to promote curriculum reform and to mobilize and foster networks between multiple stakeholders. In collaboration with the Association

of Reproductive Health Professionals we have co-organized two additional meetings of the Curriculum Reform Working Group, a group that is now comprised of more than sixty individuals and organizations. We also initiated a study that investigates the factors that influence obstetrics and gynecology residents' decision to train and intention to provide abortion care. Supported by Physicians for Reproductive Choice and Health, this mixed methods study includes a national survey of final year Ob/Gyn residents and will conclude at the end of the academic year. During 2006, we continued to actively present on topics related to reproductive health education and training, in both academic and advocacy fora, and we look forward to continuing our efforts in 2007.

"Our study found striking deficiencies in both didactic and clinical exposure to abortion care in nurse practitioner, physician assistant, and certified nurse midwifery programs"

Back Up Your Birth Control Campaign

The *Back Up Your Birth Control* (BUYBC) campaign is committed to spreading the word about emergency contraception (EC)—a safe and effective method of back up birth control. March 20, 2007, was the sixth annual BUYBC Day of Action, and a coalition of more than 100 women's health and medical organizations held dozens of educational activities nationwide to send an important message to teens: back up your birth control with EC.

Since the FDA approved over-the-counter sales of EC for adult women, but kept the prescription requirement for teens younger than 18, the BUYBC campaign understands that promoting knowledge and use of this safe and effective back up birth control method is even more important than ever. That's why the BUYBC campaign is using thousands of BUYBC campaign materials to mobilize activists around the country to educate the media and medical community and host BUYBC EC education activities on college campuses, with legislators, and for public health officials.

For more information and to order educational materials, visit www.backupyourbirthcontrol.org and BUYBC's new teen site www.ineedec.info.



Second Fellowship Cohort

This fall, we launched the second cohort of the Charlotte Ellertson Social Science Postdoctoral Fellowship in Abortion and Reproductive Health, renamed in memory of Ibis's founder. In September, fellows started at the five fellowship sites—Ibis Reproductive Health, the University of California San Francisco, Johns Hopkins University, the Guttmacher Institute and Columbia University.

We've been especially pleased to welcome Courtney B. Jackson, the fellow based at Ibis. She earned her Ph.D. in sociology and a graduate certificate in women's studies from Rutgers University, and comes to Ibis from Bowdoin College where she taught Sociology and Women's Studies courses. She has conducted research on the increase in births attended by nurse-midwives, the declining rate of Vaginal Births After Cesarean Sections (VBACs), and program evaluation and needs assessments for public health programs in Maine. Her fellowship projects will address access to abortion services, focusing on the provision of abortion services by nurse-midwives. In addition, she plans to study perceptions of Ob/Gyn residents to better understand why new doctors plan to include or exclude abortion services from their practice.

South Africa Office Update

It's summertime in South Africa, but the Ibis staff is working hard on several projects! Their largest project is the Methods for Improving Reproductive Health in Africa (MIRA) study, which began in 2003 and is coming to an end in 2007. The study, led by the University of California, San Francisco in conjunction with Ibis, the University of Zimbabwe-UCSF Collaborative Research Programme, the South African Medical Research Council, and the Perinatal HIV Research Unit, aims to determine whether the diaphragm with Replens[®] lubricant gel may reduce HIV/STI acquisition among women. Another large study, titled, Providers' Perceptions of the Diaphragm in Southern Africa and the US, funded by the National Institutes of Health and led by the University of California San Francisco (UCSF), with the University of Zimbabwe-UCSF Collaborative Programme in Women's Health, and Ibis, aims to evaluate providers' HIV prevention counseling practices and their willingness to recommend female-controlled methods for prevention of HIV/STIs and pregnancy. This study is moving into its second, quantitative phase, and results are expected in 2008. In addition to conducting research, the Ibis SA staff is actively involved in local NGO and advocacy communities. Ibis's monitoring team has recently completed the second round of a Good Clinical Practice audit for a large, randomized-controlled trial based in Cape Town. They also participate in several local alliances and networks including the Reproductive Rights Alliance, a pro-choice alliance that was integral to the passing of the Choice in Termination of Pregnancy Act in 1996. Finally, Ibis SA staff would like to say thanks to legal intern, Rachel Rebouche, for her contributions to several projects over the past few months. Thanks, Rachel!

Ibis Teaches Harvard Course

Last spring, Ibis was invited to teach a seminar-style course at the Harvard School of Public Health. The course, "International reproductive health issues: moving from theory to practice," was organized and taught by seven Ibis staff members and included discussions about family planning, emergency contraception, abortion, and HIV/AIDS. Drawing from case studies from Latin America, Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle East, and Asia, Ibis staff endeavored to provide the students with a better understanding of the complexity of working in the field of reproductive health in the international context and an appreciation of the ways in which the perspectives and methods of various health and social science disciplines can be integrated in the development of effective health programs. For the final session, Ibis staff brought together professionals from local organizations working in reproductive health to conduct an information career panel. The feedback from the course was overwhelmingly positive and we have been asked to teach a longer more detailed version of the course for three years. We look forward to an exciting spring!

Staffing Changes at Ibis

Over the course of 2006, we said goodbye to four staff members and we welcomed four new colleagues. Ibis would like to thank the two fellows from the first Ellertson Social Science Postdoctoral Fellowship in Abortion and Reproductive Health who were based at Ibis, Kimala Price and Rachel Roth, for all of the excellent work they completed in their three-year fellowships, and also for their contributions to our Cambridge office. Ann Brown, Office Manager, left Ibis over the summer and started at Suffolk University Law School in the fall. We wish her well in this new adventure! Kate Schaffer, who was a Project Manager in the Cambridge office, left Ibis in December to join Pathfinder International. We are sure Kate will make an excellent member of their team. In July, Shannon Duncan joined Ibis's Cambridge staff as Office Manager. In addition, we welcomed Courtney Jackson for the second cohort of the Ellertson fellowship in September. Britt Wahlin joined our Cambridge office as Development/Communications Manager and Signy Judd joined our San Francisco office as Senior Program Manager in January 2007 (detailed bios to follow in next issue). We are thrilled to have you all on board. Welcome all!

Ibis's Work in Latin America on Safe Abortion Access

Over the past year, Ibis has continued to develop its collaborations with several grassroots organizations working to improve access to safe abortion throughout Latin America. One highlight of this work in 2006 was helping to organize the first general meeting of the Latin American Consortium Against Unsafe Abortion that took place in Lima, Peru in May.

The meeting brought together almost 50 activists, researchers and providers working throughout Latin America to discuss issues related to medical abortion in the region and the association between the use of medications and the impact on morbidity and mortality. Five working groups were established to guide the development of a Plan of Action for the group, including: Research; Advocacy; Clinical Services; Information, Education and Communication; and Strategies to Maintain Access to Abortifacient Medications. We are currently finalizing the Plan of Action and setting up a website with our partner organizations to share information about the work of each of the consortium members.

Happy Birthday Ibis!

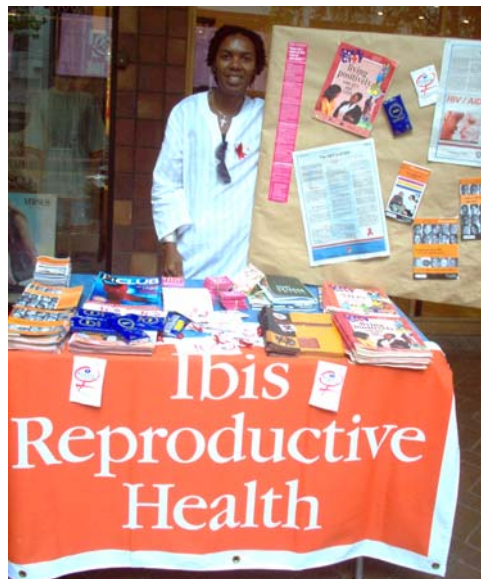
Incorporated in January 2002, Ibis celebrates its fifth birthday this year.



World AIDS Day 2006

Living in the world today one can't help but notice how the HIV/AIDS pandemic has ravaged our communities. As a young South African citizen I have directly experienced the pain and loss that the pandemic brings to all infected and affected.

For the recent World AIDS Day (December 1st), I lead Ibis's South African staff as we joined other organizations in our office complex and hosted a table where we handed out condoms and pamphlets containing information on a range of HIV-related issues. Our Johannesburg office is located next to a popular shopping mall, and our table was in the center of the mall. This was our second year hosting the table. The exercise once again reinforced our belief in the need for increased awareness on this issue and emphasized that there are limitless opportunities to share knowledge that could lead to positive change in the lives of our loved ones and fellow community members.



Ibis staff member Mthoko Radebe organized an information table during World AIDS Day.

New Morning Foundation Study

The New Morning Foundation recently provided support to Ibis Reproductive Health to conduct research and to provide technical guidance for the South Carolina Emergency Contraceptive (EC) Initiative, a three-year education campaign designed to increase access among women ages 16 to 24. Our work will focus specifically on services for sexual assault survivors. We will build on previous research that highlights the need for clarification of South Carolina's law pertaining to EC, the role of rape crisis advocates and law enforcement in helping sexual assault survivors access EC, and the need to develop strategies to educate various stakeholders. Our proposed activities for the South Carolina EC Initiative could also be used as a model for advocates in other states working to secure sexual assault survivors' access to EC-related services. For additional information, please contact Teresa Harrison by email at tharrison@ibisreproductivehealth.org.

Upcoming Events

[XVIII World Congress of the WAS, 1st World Congress for Sexual Health](#)

April 15—19, 2007

The conference theme, *Achieving Health, Pleasure and Respect*, captures the essentials of sexual health. This meeting will introduce to participating clinicians, researchers, educators, activists and policy makers the manifold, diverse and often controversial perspectives of contemporary sexual health.

[Global Health Council Conference](#)

May 29—June 1, 2007

This yearly conference is sponsored by the Global Health Council and this year's theme is *Partnerships: Working Together for Global Health*. This conference focuses on all aspects of global health and brings participants from a large array of disciplines.

[SisterSong's 2007 National Conference "Let's Talk About Sex"](#)

May 31—June 3, 2007

This four-day conference will include workshops and plenaries on topics such as birth control, senior sexuality, STDs, microbicides, gynecological health and wellness, erotica, militarism, and more, all through a reproductive justice lens.

[South African AIDS Conference](#)

June 5—8, 2007

The 2007 AIDS conference aims to serve as a platform for deliberations on the key contentious issues relating to prevention, treatment and care. In particular, the conference will highlight state-of-the-art developments in prevention technologies; new approaches to prevention; the long-term impact of highly active antiretroviral therapy on incidence, prevalence, morbidity and mortality; the role of nutrition in HIV/AIDS; and the role of research into the use of complimentary and traditional medicines in HIV/AIDS.

[Women Deliver Conference](#)

October 18—20, 2007

Women Deliver unites the broad health and development community to discuss improved women's health, safe pregnancy and childbirth. The conference theme *Invest in Women—It Pays* addresses the urgent need for greater investment in women's health, and the multiple returns such an investment yields. The theme will drive the design of the conference sessions and activities, and provide a framework for defining the conference outcomes.

Ibis's Work in the Middle East and North Africa

Over the last year we continued to build upon our previous efforts and expanded our activities in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA). In May 2006, we co-organized, with Gynuity Health Projects, l'Office National de la Famille et de la Population (Tunisia), and le Centre de Formation aux Techniques de la Santé Reproductive, a regional symposium dedicated to medication abortion in the Francophone Arab world. Entitled, "The prevention of unsafe abortion: The potential role of medication abortion methods," the three day conference was held in Tunis and included more than 30 clinicians and researchers from Mauritania, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, and Lebanon (see picture). In concert with colleagues at Bethlehem University we also extended our multi-country young women's health and sexuality study to Palestine (see picture). We completed the data collection in November and look forward to publishing the results of the study in 2007. With colleagues in Lebanon, Palestine, and Tunisia we also moved forward with our research on the reproductive health content of medical education in the MENA region. Use of the Arabic-language emergency contraception website (<http://ec.princeton.edu/Arabic/>) and the multi-lingual www.medicationabortion.com continued to grow and they now receive more than 25,000 visits per month. In 2006, we published several peer-reviewed papers and refereed book chapters and we organized a number of workshops and panels dedicated to reproductive health issues in the Arab world. We look forward to further expanding our program of work dedicated to reproductive and sexual health in the MENA region in 2007!



Medication abortion symposium participants and organizers.



Young women's health and sexuality study team, Palestine

To join the Ibis Reproductive Health mailing list, please email admin@ibisreproductivehealth.org.
