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The Promise of Vaginal Rings: From the Global Leader in Vaginal Ring Development and Implementation

Population Council

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As a user-controlled technology without the need for daily administration, vaginal rings can be a powerful delivery system for contraception and prevention against STIs, as well as treatment of other indications (including treatment of menopausal symptoms and hormone therapy). The benefits of vaginal rings are wide-ranging:

- Long-acting, with no need for daily administration
- User-initiated and controlled, with the potential for discreet use
- Rapid drug absorption through the vaginal epithelium
- Ability to deliver lower levels of drugs at a constant release rate

Several systematic reviews (e.g., Griffin et al 2019, Delvaux et al 2021, Ridgeway et al 2022, Harris et al 2022) have highlighted the acceptability of vaginal rings:

- Overall acceptability of rings, including across low- and middle-income countries, is high in both randomized controlled trials (71-98%) and observational studies (62-100%).
- Between 70-92% of women using vaginal rings and 48-92% of partners of women using vaginal rings do not feel or detect the ring during intercourse.

**PRODUCT ACCESS PATHWAY**

The Population Council follows four steps to facilitate product introduction for vaginal rings and other sexual and reproductive health technologies:

1. **Regulatory Approval**: Submit regulatory dossiers to the World Health Organization (WHO) and local regulatory bodies following a positive assessment from a stringent regulatory authority (such as the United States Food and Drug Administration or the European Medicines Agency).
2. **Government Buy-In**: Facilitate government support for products to be adopted into guidelines and policy.
3. **Community Engagement**: Create tools and materials to support community awareness and engagement.
4. **Implementation Research**: Provide technical support for pilot projects, which are conducted by in-country partners to determine the most feasible and effective way to rollout products in specific country contexts.
5. **Broader Scale Roll-Out**: Disseminate pilot study results, then apply these strategies on a broader scale.
**ANNOVERA**

Annovera is a segesterone acetate (Nestorone®) and ethinyl estradiol vaginal system and is the first product that provides an entire year of contraception while fully under a woman’s control. Annovera was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration in 2018 and is available in the U.S.

**NESTORONE-ONLY RING**

A 3- or 6-month vaginal contraceptive ring with Nestorone, a potent progestin, for individuals at risk of pregnancy, including those who have estrogen sensitivities, those who are at higher risk of venous thromboembolism, and postpartum breastfeeding mothers.

**DAPIRRING™**

The DapirRing is a 1-month vaginal ring with the antiretroviral drug dapivirine that can reduce the risk of HIV acquisition. The DapirRing received a positive scientific opinion from the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and Prequalification from WHO in 2020 and is available in a growing number of African countries.

**3-MONTH DAPIVIRINE RING**

Building on the development of the 1-month DapirRing for HIV prevention, the Council is developing a longer-acting (3-month) dapivirine vaginal ring. Women could insert the ring into the vagina and replace it every 3 months, offering them a user-controlled, long-acting HIV prevention option. By requiring only 4 (vs. 12) rings per year, this product will also reduce cost, waste, and burden on health systems.

**CONTRACEPTIVE-DAPIVIRINE RING**

This dual-purpose product is a core-sheath vaginal ring designed to slowly release the antiretroviral drug dapivirine, for HIV prevention, and the contraceptive hormone levonorgestrel. Women would replace the ring every three months, offering them a user-controlled, long-acting option for contraception and HIV prevention.

**NON-HORMONAL MULTIPURPOSE PREVENTION TECHNOLOGY (MPT) RING**

A 3-month contraceptive non-hormonal vaginal ring with the potential to offer broad anti-microbial activity against chlamydia, gonorrhea, herpes-simplex virus-2, HIV, and bacterial vaginosis. This product could be an appealing option to the many women who want to avoid hormonal methods and their associated side effects.