

**DESIRE**

Developing and Evaluating Short-acting  
Innovations for Rectal Use

**IN**



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MTN 2020 Annual Meeting (9-12 February 2020)

Crystal Gateway Marriott



University of the Witwatersrand

**WITS RHI**

# Outline

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- South Africa in context
- Current prevention approaches for SGM
- Community we serve
- DESIRE implementation update
- Early lessons from the study

# South Africa – Rainbow Nation

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# Rainbow People – Proudly SA!



# Background

- SA has complex and diverse history regarding human rights of LGBTI people.
- Legal and social status of between 400,000–over 2 million LGBTI SAs has been influenced by combination of
  - traditional SA norms, colonialism, and the lingering effects of apartheid and the human rights movement that contributed to its abolition.
- Given the transformative principles related to post apartheid SA the constitution was revised also relating to LGBTI people.
  - SA first in world to outlaw discrimination based on sexual orientation in 1996
  - SA was the fifth country in the world, and the first—and to date, ---only in Africa, to legalise same-sex marriage in 2006.

# True Colours

“I see your true colours shining through...



So don't be afraid to let them show, your true colours are beautiful like a rainbow.....”





# Rainbow People –

**PROUD** ly SA!





# History

- LGBTI people enjoy constitutional and statutory protections from discrimination in employment, provision of goods and services and many other areas.
- However, just as post apartheid constitutional laws alone have not changed all peoples ingrained behaviour with regards to racism ....
- **LGBTI South Africans continue to face challenges, including homophobic violence stigma, shame, criminalization, provider bias and..... high rates of HIV/AIDS infection**

# Oral PrEP programmes in SA

**Table 1. SA progress towards achieving NSP targets for oral PrEP rollout [1]**

Year/s	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20
<b>AGYW Target</b>	4110	12332	24663
Progress to date	69	8149	7565
% Progress to date	2%	66%	31%
<b>MSM Target</b>	818	1844	3383
Progress to date	1211	1484	530
% Progress to date	148%	80%	16%
<b>SW Target</b>	1880	3640	6280
Progress to date	2413	3781	1454
% Progress to date	128%	104%	23%

- Oral PrEP works for prevention of HIV but it may not be accessible, available or desired among certain population segments.

# Prevention in SGM communities

- Beyond efficacy considerations, users may also select products based on Behavioral Congruence, Different protection windows, Youth Friendliness, Ease of Use, Autonomy, Access
- Maleable in willingness to test and adopt new behaviours and test new interventions
- SGM who practice RAI may benefit most from rectal microbicide products - Important to include cis and transgender people

# Where are we and what do we do?



# Wits RHI Transgender Programme

- 2016-2018 conducted the TRANSFORM study at our CRS
- October 2018 - Wits RHI recipient of a five-year USAID award to advance HIV response amongst the trans population and expand on work done within the trans communities.
- Supported by the SA NDOH and provincial and district partners.
- Trans clinics in four health districts: Cape Town, Buffalo City, Nelson Mandela Bay and Johannesburg.

# Wits RHI Transgender Programme

## Outcomes to date across all clinics :

- **HIV prevention services** (education, condoms and lubricants, counselling) to 4 500
- **HIV counselling and testing** to 1 861 transgender people.
- **ART** to 242 transgender people.
- **PrEP** to 470 transgender people.



# Wits RHI Trans Agents and CRS staff





# Wits RHI Community Engagement



## WOULD YOU LIKE TO VOLUNTEER?

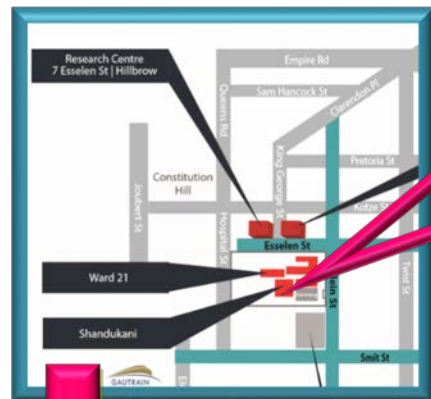
If Yes, please call us!!!

Tel No: 011 358 5424

Ask for Motsamai, Hlalifi, Sylvia, or Lizzy



## HOW TO FIND US:



**We are here**  
**Wits RHI**  
**Research Centre**  
**No. 7 Esselen**  
**Street**  
**Hillbrow**



MTN-035/DESIRE Flyer Version 1.0; 17 Sep 19. Approved 26 Sep 19

# BE A PART OF THE FIGHT AGAINST HIV!



COME LEARN MORE ABOUT

# DESIRE

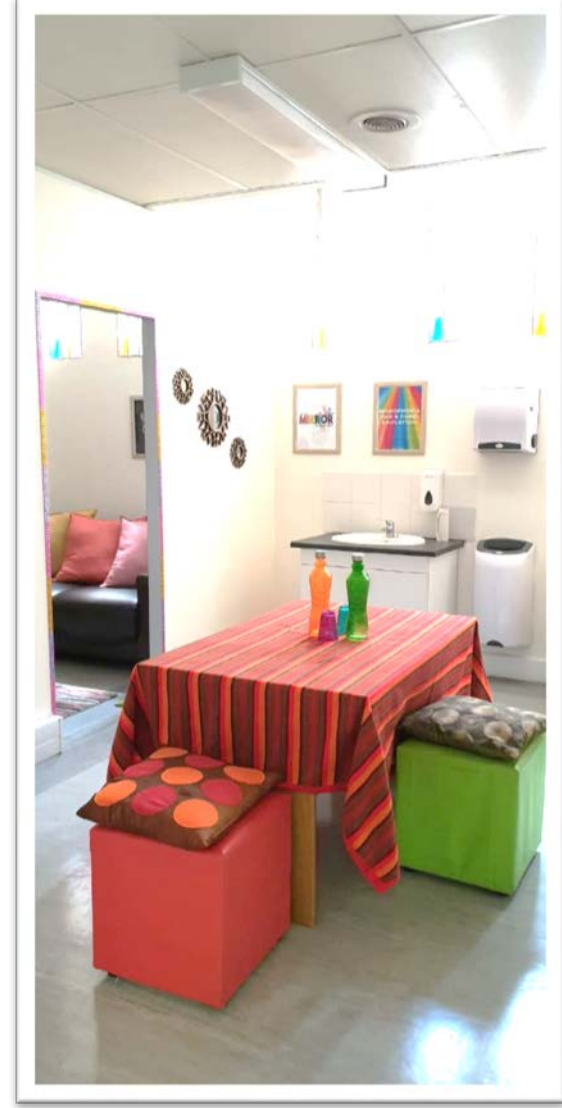
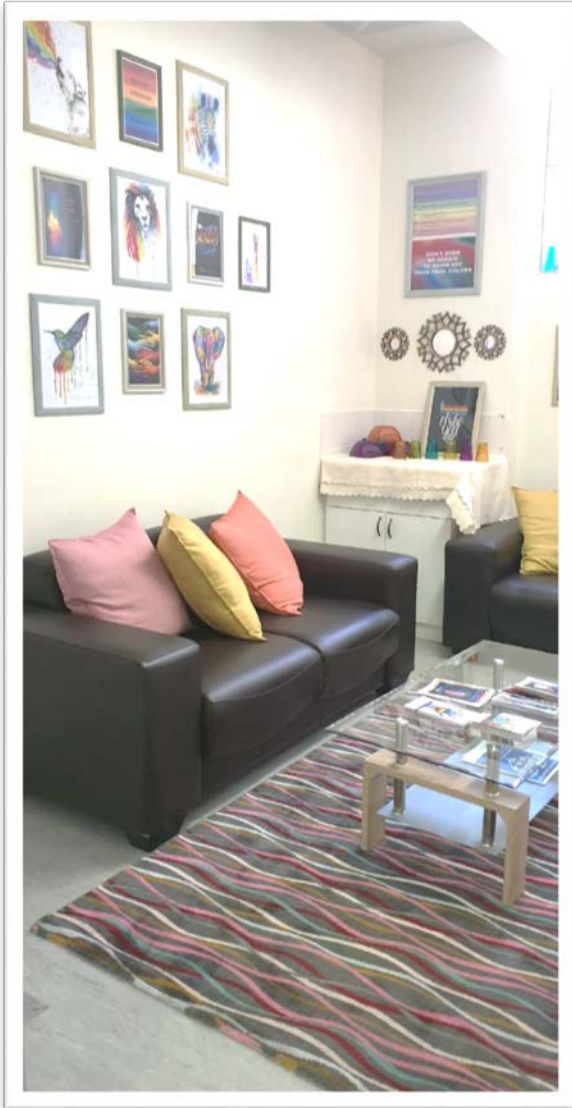
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# Wits RHI CRS TV Lounge area



# Wits RHI CRS MSM/TGW Lounge



# DESIRE Implementation Summary

- Goal :30 participants
- Site Activation : 18 Oct 2019
- Date of first enrolment: 7 Nov 2019
- Number pre-screened : 35 (10 ineligible due to HIV+; of those 5 TGW and 5 MSM)
- Number screened : 21
- Number enrolled: 17- only 1 is on oral PrEP



# Participant Characteristics

- Age : range 19-28 years , mean 22 years
- Black, Male at birth
- Challenges identifying TGM
- STIs at Baseline
  - Pharyngeal GC/CT positive
  - Anal warts
  - Anorectal CT
  - Syphilis
- Anoscopy
- Gratitude for POC STI testing and treatment
- Preferences vary



# MTN-035/DESIRE events





# Wits RHI RC Engagement Activities



# Motivations for Enrolment

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- Seek understanding of complexities associated with use of HIV prevention interventions designed with MSM in mind – behavioural congruence
- Passionate about identifying better health options for MSM
- Strong advocates for MSM HIV prevention related care
- Learn about potential future modalities of HIV prevention options
- Learn about the study placebo products and how they will inform the pipeline of options for MSM

# What are Participants' Current Challenges

- Provider skills in management of MSM/TGW specific health issues and STI diagnoses/management
- Stigma , violence, abuse and discrimination persist in communities
- Access to feminizing hormone replacement therapy



# Hormone Replacement Therapy

- NDOH approved HRT for gender dysphoria to their essential medicines list on **the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 2019**, a first for South Africa.
  - 25 years later- is step forward in ensuring public health system responds to healthcare needs of transgender and gender diverse South Africans.
- TG clinics will be able to provide HRT in three of the four districts and are in the process of negotiating HRT for the clinics in Buffalo City Metropolitan district .
- Although HRT is approved by NDoH, district is awaiting governance meetings to provide a process plan for HRT roll out in BCM.

# Conclusion

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- As past PrEP and microbicide studies have shown, drug efficacy translates to drug effectiveness when drug based intervention is used as intended
- DESIRE factors in products designed as vehicles to potentially deliver drugs via mechanisms that may be a good behavioural fit with the intended end-users
- Understanding participants' acceptability and experiences with non-gel delivery vehicles (e.g., douche, insert, suppository) is essential for future product development

# Acknowledgements

- Donors
- MTN leadership
- DESIRE Protocol management team
- FHI360
- DESIRE Participants
- Wits RHI staff
- Wits RHI CABs and stakeholders



The Microbicide Trials Network is funded by the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (UM1AI068633, UM1AI068615, UM1AI106707), with co-funding from the *Eunice Kennedy Shriver* National Institute of Child Health and Human Development and the National Institute of Mental Health, all components of the U.S. National Institutes of Health.