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Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report

Science & Medicine | Gates Foundation Gives Group \$28.5M for Microbicide Research, Officials Say
 [Dec 04, 2007]

The [Eastern Virginia Medical School](#) in Norfolk, Va., on Friday announced that its Arlington, Va.-based [CONRAD](#) program has received a five-year, \$28.5 million grant from the [Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation](#) to conduct microbicide research, the [Newport News Daily Press](#) reports (Flores, *Newport News Daily Press*, 12/1). Microbicides include a range of products -- such as gels, films and sponges -- that could help prevent the sexual transmission of HIV and other infections ([Kaiser Daily HIV/AIDS Report](#), 2/20).

According to Gustavo Doncel, director of preclinical research for CONRAD, the grant will fund research on a new generation of microbicides that use antiretroviral drugs. Antiretrovirals when taken orally have been effective in treating HIV, but this research will test their efficacy when used in a topical vaginal gel that could prevent the sexual transmission of the virus, the [Virginian-Pilot](#) reports. CONRAD Executive Director Henry Gabelnick said that the development of a microbicide is important because women are especially vulnerable to HIV transmission through sexual activity. "It's clear that women are the majority of the new cases of HIV-positive people," Gabelnick said, adding, "If their partners won't use condoms, this gives women a product that they can use to protect themselves."

There are currently no microbicides on the market, but some have made it into the later stages of clinical trials, the [Pilot](#) reports. "The virus is much sneakier and cheekier than what we thought it would be," Doncel said. CONRAD is "poised to deliver something that is significant in the area of HIV prevention," Doncel added (Young, *Virginian-Pilot*, 12/1). The Gates Foundation to date has donated \$65 million to CONRAD for microbicide research (*Newport News Daily Press*, 12/1).

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