



For immediate release 31 October 2005

Contact Emma Bickerstaff at NAT on 020 7814 6730 or 07947 725 299

NAT Welcomes Pharmaceutical Support of Microbicide Research to Fight the Spread of HIV

NAT welcomes today's announcement from two of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies, Merck & Co., Inc. and Bristol-Myers Squibb that they have signed separate license agreements with the International Partnership for Microbicides (IPM) to develop new antiretroviral compounds as potential microbicides to protect women from HIV.

Under the two separate agreements, Merck and Bristol-Myers Squibb will each grant the non-profit group a royalty-free license to develop, manufacture and distribute their compounds for use as microbicides in resource-poor countries.

Deborah Jack, Chief Executive of the National AIDS Trust said:

"The National AIDS Trust welcomes this initiative. Microbicides, once developed, could save the lives of millions of women. Merck & Co. and Bristol-Myers Squibb have set a good example for the pharmaceutical industry by sharing research and helping to bring forward the day when microbicides will be a successful method of preventing the spread of HIV."

Microbicides could be developed as products, such as gels or as vaginal rings that release the drug gradually over time, reducing transmission of HIV during vaginal sex. It is estimated that even a partially effective microbicide could prevent 2.5 million HIV infections over a period of three years.

Notes to the Editor

1. The National AIDS Trust (NAT) is the UK's leading, independent policy and campaigning voice on HIV and AIDS. We develop policies and campaign to halt the spread of HIV and AIDS, and improve the quality of life of people affected by HIV, both in the UK and internationally. We aim to prevent the spread of HIV and AIDS, ensure people living with HIV have access to treatment and care, and eradicate HIV-related stigma and discrimination. www.nat.org.uk
2. The International Partnership for Microbicides was established to accelerate the development and accessibility of vaginal microbicides to prevent the transmission of HIV. By screening compounds, designing optimal formulations, establishing manufacturing capacity, developing trial sites and conducting large scale efficacy trials, the organization works to improve the efficiency of all efforts to develop and deliver safe and effective microbicides as soon as possible. IPM receives funding from the governments of Canada, Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States, as well as the European Commission, the Rockefeller and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundations, and the World. More information is available at www.ipm-microbicides.org