



Early Learnings from Implementation Research on Acceptability of the Shang Ring device for Voluntary Medical Male Circumcision in Zimbabwe, 2022

Authors

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Background

In 2016 WHO advised a shift in the recommended age group for voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) to 15 years and above due to surgical safety concerns in younger males. Zimbabwe's Integrate project started recruitment in a large scale clinical observational study to evaluate the safety of the Shang Ring (SR) VMMC device among younger adolescents (13-16 years) to provide an alternative to surgical VMMC for these ages for scale up.

Materials and Methods

Circumcisers in nine selected districts were trained and certified for Shang Ring proficiency over 3 months. Protocol and data collection training were conducted over six months while the program sensitized community gate keepers, trained community and school mobilizers on SR messaging. Safety data on adverse events was collected among all study participants. All participants received self-administered survey questionnaires to assess satisfaction post procedure at the end of the healing process.

Results

Residual demand for "the ring": After successful implementation of a PrePex "Ring" campaign between 2014 and 2016, qualitative feedback from stakeholders and male clients indicate a residual "Ring" demand for Shang Ring. SR uptake exceeded 50% among clients 15 years and older across the nine pilot districts after introduction in September 2022.

Client Satisfaction: Of the 1,600 responses, 1,560 (98%) reported being satisfied or very satisfied, while 1,537 (96%) indicated they would recommend Shang Ring to someone.

Client Eligibility: Four of the 9 implementing districts collected data on reasons for device ineligibility among 870 clients, with 828 (95%) being eligible for the device procedure. Of the 42 who were ineligible, 16 had anatomical disorders (hypospadias and phimosis), 12 were outside the eligible age group, and 4 required device sizes that were not available.

Reduced time to Provider Proficiency: Observation of device training participants showed that providers who received no prior VMMC training needed fewer clients (<5) and less time to proficiency compared to surgical proficiency (10-15 clients).

Conclusions

The combination of ease of device training, client selection, and very high client satisfaction confirms the known benefits of the device in VMMC, which may outweigh the logistical complexities of the Shang Ring device.