

## ORIGINAL RESEARCH—EPIDEMIOLOGY

## An Event-Level Analysis of Adding Exogenous Lubricant to Condoms in a Sample of Men Who Have Vaginal Sex with Women

Michael Reece, PhD, MPH,\* Kristen Mark, MSc,\* Debby Herbenick, PhD, MPH,\*  
Devon J. Hensel, PhD,<sup>†</sup> Sofia Jawed-Wessel, MPH,\* and Brian Dodge, PhD\*

\*Center for Sexual Health Promotion, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, USA; <sup>†</sup>Section of Adolescent Medicine, School of Medicine, Indiana University, Indianapolis, IN, USA

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction.** Little is known about the characteristics of sexual events during which individuals choose to use lubricant with condoms.

**Aims.** The aims of this article were to evaluate the determinants of adding lubricant to condoms during baseline and at the event level, to assess the event-level variables' influence on adding lubricants to condoms, and to assess the event-level influence of using condoms with lubricant on event-level condom attitudes.

**Methods.** A total of 1,874 men completed a 30-day Internet-based prospective daily diary study of sexual behavior and condom use.

**Main Outcome Measures.** Baseline data included demographic variables and information about condom education. Daily diary data included reports of penile-vaginal sex regarding intercourse duration, intercourse intensity, intoxication level, condom application method, partner contraceptive method, and partner and relationship characteristics.

**Results.** Lubricant was added to 24.3% of the study-provided condoms and 26.2% of the condoms selected by study participants. Those with more education and those who were married were more likely to add lubrication to condoms. Adding lubricant to condoms, a female partner putting the condom on with her hands and using contraception, and the event occurring with a wife (vs. girlfriend) was significantly associated with longer intercourse. Event-level lubricant and condom use significantly predicted lower willingness to buy the condom it was used with, as well as to recommend the condom. Adding exogenous lubricant was not related to the participants' confidence in condoms as a method to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.

**Conclusions.** The event-level nature of this study provided for a more comprehensive assessment of the situational factors that are associated with applying lubricant to condoms. Findings from this study suggest that men are adding lubricant to condoms for reasons other than to increase condom efficacy. **Reece M, Mark K, Herbenick D, Hensel DJ, Jawed-Wessel S, and Dodge B. An event-level analysis of adding exogenous lubricant to condoms in a sample of men who have vaginal sex with women. J Sex Med 2012;9:672–678.**

**Key Words.** Condoms; Lubricant; Condom Breakage; Event-Level Condom Use; Diary Data

### Introduction

Public health initiatives have included recommendations to add exogenous water- or silicone-based lubricant to condoms in order to reduce the risk of condom failure, particularly breakage [1], and to avoid the use of oil-based lubricant with latex condoms as the combination

increases likelihood of condom breakage [2–4]. Studies examining the use of lubricant within the context of condom use behaviors have been inconsistent, with some reporting lower than average rates of condom failure (notably, breakage) when exogenous lubricant was used [5,6]. Other studies have documented breakage and slippage of condoms as being associated with one's

inappropriate use of lubricants [7] and that the use of exogenous lubricant doubled the risk of slippage for vaginal intercourse but reduced slippage risk for anal intercourse [8].

In addition, some researchers have studied the extent to which adding lubricant to condoms results in user ratings of increased sexual pleasure and satisfaction as a function of improving comfort during intercourse, improving perceptions of condom efficacy [9], and improving sexual sensations for men [10,11].

To date, no studies have specifically examined factors associated with individuals adding exogenous lubricant to condoms, the manner in which this occurs with regard to lubricant placement, interactions between partners, and perceived outcomes of doing so. Given the increased availability of lubricants in mainstream marketplaces and that advertising for personal lubricants is more visible, it is important to understand how people use lubricants during their sexual activities, particularly during sexual events that involve condom use. The combination of lubricant and condom use has implications for how people perceive each of these products in terms of comfort, pleasure, and efficacy.

### **Aims**

This study sought to: (1) evaluate the determinants of adding lubricant to condoms during vaginal intercourse based upon both baseline and sexual event-specific variables; (ii) assess the event-level predictor variables' influence on event-level condom and lubricant use as an outcome; and (iii) assess the event-level influence of using condoms with lubricant as a predictor of event-level condom attitudes.

### **Methods**

#### **Study Design and Data**

Data were collected as part of a larger study comparing condom outcomes [12]. Male participants were primarily recruited from seven geographically diverse states in the United States that have consistently had a history of high HIV or sexually transmitted infection (STI) prevalence (California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, New York, and Texas). Within each state, recruitment advertisements were placed in diverse electronic and print sources, including: (i) college campus newspapers at the largest public university in each state; (ii) sexually oriented Internet sites, electronic bulletin boards, and Internet chat rooms that were specific

to each of the prioritized states; (iii) gay-related print media of the cities with the largest gay-identified community in each state; and (iv) at HIV and STI testing and prevention-oriented agencies in each state. Although focus was placed on the states listed previously, electronic recruitment led to rapid dissemination that represented all 50 states of the United States.

Eligibility for participation included that men were at least 18 years of age, were currently sexually active with another person (being "sexually active" was defined in recruitment materials as being the insertive partner in intercourse an average of three times per week), were currently using condoms as a method for disease and/or pregnancy prevention, agreed to continue using any additional non-condom contraceptive methods during the study period, and had no known history of allergies or adverse reactions to latex condoms or water- or silicone-based lubricants.

All data were collected using an Internet-based daily diary methodology. Study methods, requirements, and purpose were provided online, and men who signed an electronic consent form were enrolled. Men who qualified for the study received a total of 12 latex condoms, as well as guidelines for proper condom use via mail. Once men received the condoms, 1,834 men returned to the study website daily for the duration of 30 days to complete measures related to their condom use and sexual behaviors. All study protocols were approved by the Institutional Review Board of Indiana University-Bloomington.

### **Main Outcome Measures**

#### **Baseline Measures**

Age, race/ethnicity, education, marital status, condom acquisition (study condom, condom supplied by partner, participant's own condom), and condom education (package information, parent, teacher, partner, friend, other family member, media such as magazine or television) were collected as baseline measures.

#### **Event-Level Measures**

Participants provided data on a series of event-level measures specific to a maximum of three vaginal and three anal intercourse events per day during the 30-day diary period. For each intercourse event, measures included: intercourse duration (five-point Likert scale, "less than 2 minutes" to "longer than 30 minutes"), intercourse intensity (three-point Likert scale, "low intensity [slow, gentle]," "high intensity [fast, rough]," or "mixed

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