

Challenges of achieving effective contraception women of reproductive potential in malaria vaccine trials in Equatorial Guinea

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Past studies have shown that the knowledge and use of contraception among women of reproductive potential in Equatorial Guinea is limited. Additionally, the national family planning program discourages the use of hormonal methods of birth control for females under the age of 18, and instead recommends the use of abstinence or barrier methods. Since a new law established in 2016 banned school attendance for pregnant students, pregnant teens have increasingly sought out induced abortions, which are illegal in the country. A recent clinical trial of PfSPZ Vaccine, which included females age 6 months to 65 years, revealed the difficulties of achieving effective contraception among volunteers who were inexperienced in the use of birth control. Of the 15 female volunteers of childbearing age enrolled in the trial, 5 (33%) chose oral contraceptives, 5 (33%) chose a medroxyprogesterone injection, 3 (20%) chose abstinence + condoms, and 2 (13%) chose abstinence alone. Three pregnancies occurred among these volunteers during the trial. This experience highlighted the pressing need to expand sex education and contraceptive availability in the country, as well as provide more reliable forms of birth control such as medroxyprogesterone to all trial participants.