



**Male Contraceptive
Initiative**

2019 Annual Report





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Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.

**Margaret Mead,
Cultural Anthropologist**



MISSION & VISION

Male Contraceptive Initiative's (MCI) mission is to facilitate research & development of male contraceptives for people around the world and to build awareness among researchers, donors, and the general public about the demand for and status of novel male contraceptive methods.

MCI was founded in 2014 in Durham, North Carolina. *We are a global hub for researchers, philanthropists, and advocates in search of ways to advance the development of novel safe, non-hormonal, reversible male contraceptives.*

MCI is working diligently to reimagine and bring an empowered, inclusive, choice-maximized world of contraception to people globally. Our work will make the world a better place by transforming the contraceptive landscape to enable betterment and self-determination for all people. *Because it takes two, and it's about time!*



A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear friends,

When I founded the “Foundation for Male Contraception” in 2013, I was fueled by a wave of inspiration derived from an article that I wrote for *Genetic Engineering & Biotechnology News* entitled “Men and Women Need a New Male Contraceptive.” Encouraged to write the piece by Elaine Lissner, who I consider to be a co-founder, the piece was meant to inspire action from the research community. I’m not sure how many researchers I convinced, but I convinced myself. Having just retired after 25 years of work in contraceptive research at FHI 360, including several vasectomy studies, I was very aware of the need for new, reversible, male contraceptive methods and wanted to do something about it.



David presenting MCI's work in 2017

Aaron Hamlin joined as a third co-founder and our first Executive Director in 2014. With this growth, we decided to make a fresh start and filed the paperwork to create a new non-profit, “Male Contraception Initiative.” Through this strong collaboration, particularly Elaine’s willingness to forward press inquiries to us, we started to become a leading resource for male contraception information to the press, thus establishing our place as advocates for the research community.

It was in 2016 that we were able to start a serious shift towards becoming a grant making organization through the support of an anonymous donor. This support allowed us to hire our first full-time employee in 2017, our Director of Programs and Operations, Logan Nickels.

Fast-forward to 2019, a mere five years after formally establishing the MCI that exists today (with one small

A LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

tweak to Male “Contraceptive” Initiative), we are able to say that we have granted over \$3 million dollars in support of:

- 12 research projects
- Five research fellows, and
- A multitude of other professionals through travel support

It is with great joy that I reflect on the journey. I also feel gratitude towards MCI’s co-founders Elaine Lissner and Aaron Hamlin; our first “working board” members (who more than earned the title), Emily Dorman, Mitch Eddy, Beverly Tucker, Deb Levine, Gail King, Clay Lynch, Robert Miller, and Carol Sloan: and to early board members Michael O’Rand, Nancy Wallace, and Dominick Shattuck.

It is with great anticipation of what is to come that I thank our current board members, Karen Blyth, Carolyn Jenkins, Gregory Kopf, Debbie O’Brien, Susan Sharpless, and Michael Rusnak. And of course, our current staff who share my passion to bring new methods of non-hormonal, reversible, male contraceptives to the men and women who desire them – and are “doing something about it”: Heather Vahdat, Logan Nickels, Kevin Shane, Kathryn Carpenter, and Kathreen “Nica” Daria.

Last, but certainly not least, I would like to thank all of you who support our work through your generous donations, advocacy, and collaboration. I look forward to seeing where the next five years take us!

Regards,



Dr. David Sokal,
Co-Founder & Board Chairman



A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear All,

MCI had a big year in 2019 as we celebrated our fifth anniversary! It is amazing to see the progress that has been made in the field since 2014 and we are thrilled to have been a part of it. We are especially proud of the fact that 2019 saw MCI cross a total granting threshold of \$3 million! This absolutely could not have been a reality without the support of our donors – we continue to be humbled by your generosity and support. We extend our most sincere thanks and appreciation to each of you.

There were many exciting activities for MCI this year, we welcomed five new grantees to our portfolio, three additional Research Fellows to our ranks, our first public health fellow (who we were able to convince to stay on as a part-time member of our staff), and a wonderful community of colleagues who have come to be known as “Team Science”.

While our specific corner of contraceptive R&D is small, the fact remains that we are an ecosystem of dedicated researchers and advocates operating in a resource-limited environment; a subset of the underfunded niche field that is contraception. Many have spent their careers tending the coals of potential male methods with merely their dedication to the cause and patchwork funding. This environment, while challenging, has fostered an intimate community built on collaboration and partnerships.

It is for this reason that MCI sponsored an ideation workshop in July of 2019. A highlight of 2019 for me, the workshop was facilitated in collaboration with our colleagues and design thinking pioneers at IDEO. The three-day workshop explored the challenges faced by researchers in the non-hormonal reversible male contraceptive (NHRMC) research and development community and concerns related to down-stream challenges, some of which we may not have identified yet. It was an exciting event that provided rich insights



“Team Science” at IDEO headquarters in San Francisco

A LETTER FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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for how we can work together through a next-level collaboration termed “Team Science”, where researchers are willing and feel safe to engage their colleagues in an open and collaborative manner, sharing experiences, challenges, and failures, in real-time, to promote efficient and effective progress toward getting NHRMC products to market.

It is impossible not to recognize the fact that we are at the threshold of a new decade where, for arguably the first time in a very long time, we are seeing enough momentum in the field to realistically anticipate significant progress towards the development of reversible, non-hormonal male methods of contraception by 2030. We view the next decade as a time for growth at MCI so that we can evolve and continue to serve future users, advocates, and the research community to whom we are so deeply committed.

I ask you all consider yourselves a part of team science and I encourage you to reach out to us with your needs, challenges, and ideas so that we can work together to brainstorm and advocate for solutions.

I hope that you will enjoy reviewing the accomplishments detailed in the pages of this report, but, more importantly, I hope that you will be inspired by what you see, as we are nearly every day.

Sincerely,



Heather Vahdat,
Executive Director



STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

Male contraception research and development has languished due to limited funding opportunities and a lack of focused attention on its need and value. This is particularly true of non-hormonal, reversible methods of male contraception (NHRMC) due to the anticipated rigorous regulatory pathway, and extended timelines for efficacy and safety testing. We seek to address this need for support by funding research and development of NHRMC products, by supporting young professionals interested in the field, and by advocating for and providing accurate information about male contraceptives.

This model is designed to create demand and interest for male contraception in the short-term, while providing novel NHRMC products in the long-term.





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Contraception in general is one of the best ways to both give people rights at the same time as you're saving the planet. Because you give people the choice to do what they want.

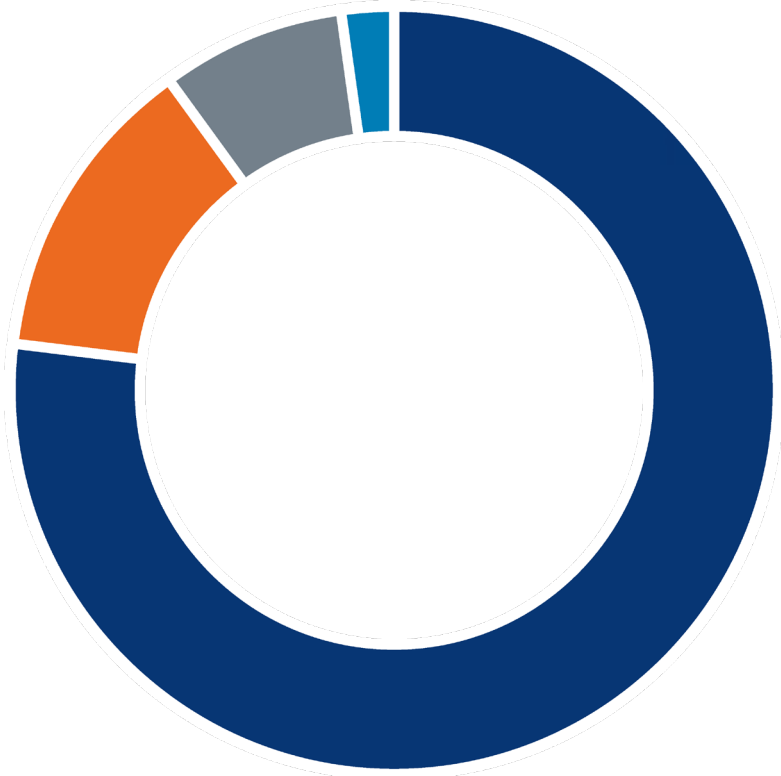


**Elaine Lissner,
Founder, Parsemus Foundation**

INVESTMENT SUMMARY

EXPENSES: \$1,951,891

Reporting year January 1, 2019 - December 31, 2019 (unaudited)

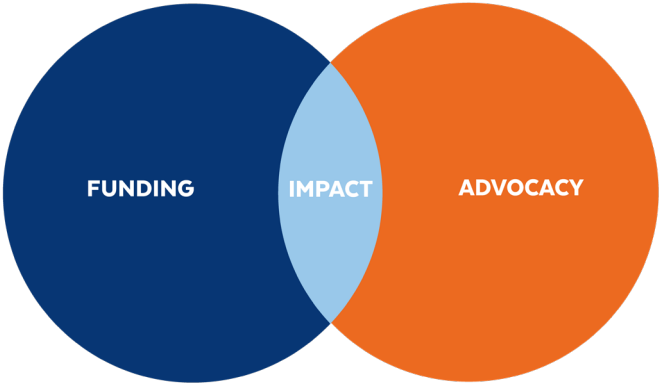


- Research (77%)
- Advocacy (13%)
- Administration (8%)
- Fundraising (2%)

Our investment strategy is focused on maximizing impact. As a nonprofit, we are keenly aware of the importance each dollar has in advancing our mission. We treat each donation and contribution to our organization with the importance it deserves.

This focus on impact and efficiency allowed us to commit **90% of our funding** towards programs to facilitate research and development of new male contraceptive products and to support professional development of the next generation of researchers and advocates.

Through our bifurcated strategy of funding the development of new male methods and advocating for the same, MCI achieves **impact** in both the short-term and long-term.



GRANTING STRATEGY

Our granting portfolio is built on providing support to projects across the male contraceptive product development pipeline. Our diverse mix of investments include Discovery and Development Grants, which are intended to move contraceptive projects further down the pathway, Seed Grants, which give legs to innovative research, and Vas-Occlusive grants, which support medical devices - potentially a faster route-to-market for male contraception. (For more information about the development pathway, read [this blog post](#) from MCI).

Our grant portfolio was initiated in 2017 with a \$500,000 Discovery and Development Grant to Vibliome Therapeutics, and evolved to include Seed Grants in 2018. These anchor investments served to create our initial grant portfolio that was expanded in 2019 and diversified to include Device Grants. The diversification strategy, focused on including Vas-Occlusive products, presents an opportunity for products in later stages of development to inform the route-to-market for male contraceptive methods more broadly.

Discovery & Development Grant

In 2017, MCI provided \$500,000 to Dr. Gary Flynn and his team at Vibliome Therapeutics, based in Bozeman, MT, to develop selective inhibitors of homeodomain-interacting protein kinase 4 (HIPK4).

Seed Grant Recipients

Since 2018, MCI has provided \$150,000 grants to:

Dr. Gunda Georg
Dr. Wei Yan
Dr. Sab Ventura
Dr. Patricia Cuasnicu

2019 GRANTEES

Discovery & Development Grants



Dr. Michael O'Rand
Eppin Pharma

Dr. O'Rand is seeking to complete a checklist of studies required for submission of an Investigational New Drug application for his on-demand contraceptive, Eppin. The approval of an IND will lead directly to Phase I clinical trials, and MCI's grant to Dr. O'Rand supports specific milestones on the path to an IND.

\$300,000 // 2 Years



Dr. Stephen Palmer
Baylor College of Medicine

Dr. Palmer's project focuses on the optimization of small-molecule inhibitors of the contraceptive target LDHC. The overall goal in this funding effort is to bring a compound to the stage of non-clinical development that inhibits LDHC, through depletion of the energy source required for hyperactive motility of sperm, and prevents fertilization and conception in rodent models.

\$300,000 // 2 Years

2019 GRANTEES

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Seed Grants



Dr. Steven L'Hernault
Emory University

Dr. L'Hernault is building a screening platform to find inhibitors of Izumo1, a key actor in fertilization. This grant from MCI seeks to identify small compounds that, when used to treat *C. elegans* expressing a SPE-45-human IZUMO1 hybrid protein, render them reversibly sterile because they produce fertilization-incompetent spermatozoa.

\$150,000 // 2 Years



Dr. Zhibing Zhang
Wayne State University

Dr. Zhang is screening for molecules that prevent the interaction of MEIG1 and PACRG, required for sperm formation. MCI will support Dr. Zhang and his lab to optimize a cell-free luciferase assay to identify small molecule inhibitors of MEIG1/PACRG interaction. These small molecule inhibitors have potential for the development of male-based contraceptives.

\$150,000 // 2 Years

2019 GRANTEES

Device Grants



Dr. Linda Brent
Revolution Contraceptives

MCI is funding Dr. Brent's work in an ongoing small pilot study of the vas-occlusive Vasalgel. The planned evaluations will be based on contraceptive effectiveness, procedural simplicity, reversibility, and safety. This proof-of-concept study will build on results from earlier preclinical studies and should support a future application for clinical trials in men.

\$200,000 // 2 Years



Kevin Eisenfrats
Contraline

Contraline's proprietary hydrogel Echo-VR is implanted into the vas deferens through a minimally invasive, outpatient procedure. It works by blocking sperm from traveling through the vas deferens, and is designed to last for years and be reversible. MCI's funding will be used to refine the implantation procedure.

\$200,000 // 1 Year

TRAINEE SUPPORT

Young researchers are integral to the future of the field, and to male contraception as a whole. Our support programs ensure that these powerful individuals have the means to continue on in male contraception for years to come.

Research Fellows



Max Lyon
Washington University in St. Louis



Melanie Balbach
Weill Cornell Medical College



Jae Yeon Hwang
Yale University



Liliya Gabalev
University of California - Berkeley

Travel Grants

We have provided over **\$20,000** in travel grants to 15 individuals to attend conferences and events in the field since 2018.

Other Support

Our other support programs include sponsorship of training courses, university capstone projects, and internships.

**Learn more about
our Trainee Support**



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As a mom of teenagers, I think that male contraception is going to be an invaluable prevention tool for men, as well as for women.

**Bethany Young Holt,
Executive Director and Founder, CAMI Health
& Initiative for MPTs**



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Growing Team

Four new members joined our board, our permanent staff grew to five members, and three additional graduate fellows joined the team.

Expanded Grantmaking

We expanded our investment portfolio to include additional discovery and development grants, seed grants, device grants, travel grants, and fellowships.

Advocating & Educating

We participated in conferences & events, and appeared in numerous media outlets, in order to advocate for and provide accurate information about male methods.

Ideation & Collaboration

We convened subject matter experts to utilize design thinking methodology to identify opportunities and challenges in accelerating male contraception research and development.

Framing Market Demand

We released our first Consumer Research Study which found a potential market of 17 million men interested in new methods of male contraception.

Fostering Youth Engagement

We launched a Youth Advisory Board in an effort to develop a holistic understanding of perspectives around male contraception and to expand advocacy efforts.

TEAM SCIENCE

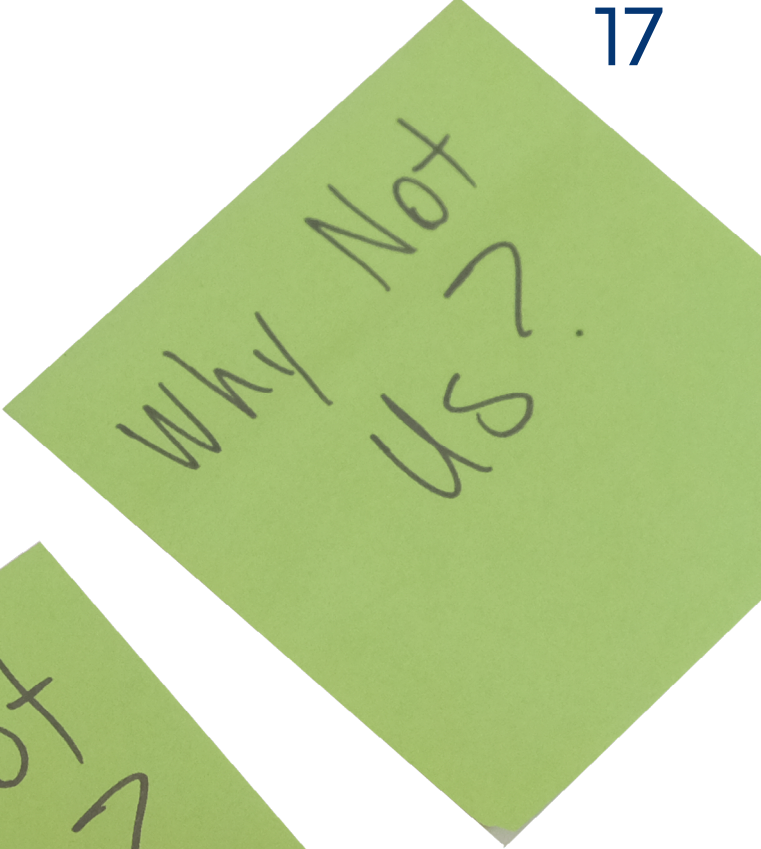
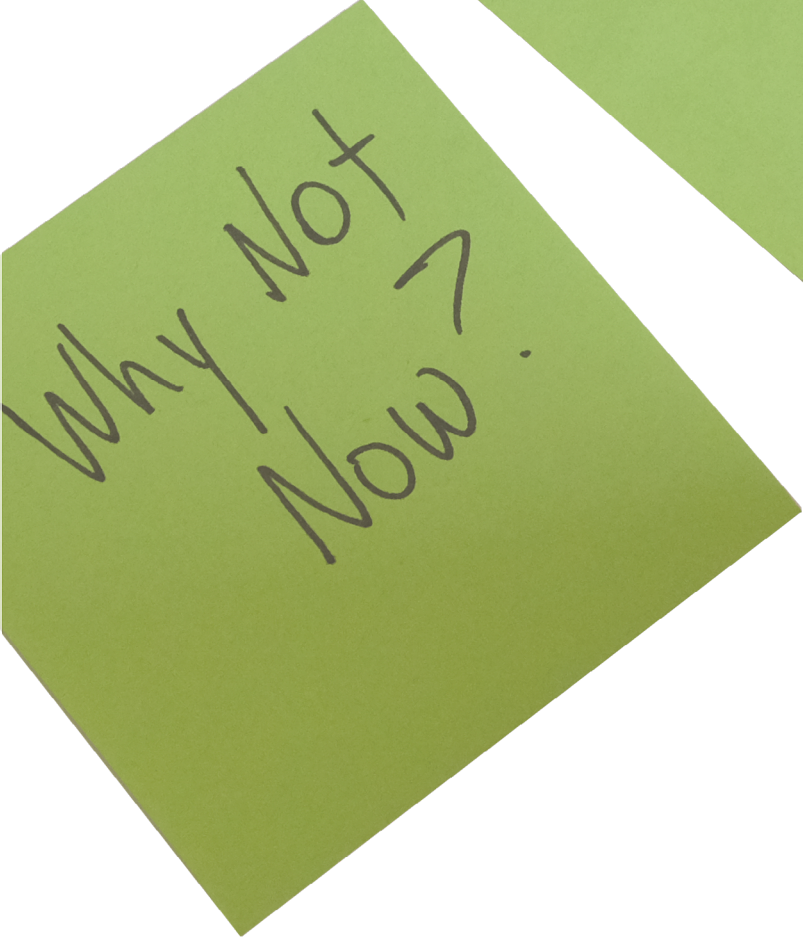
Male contraception is a field with broad-reaching challenges that require a thoughtful, cross-collaborative approach. From funding challenges to societal norms, male contraception faces hurdles that will require expertise both across and deep within the drug development pipeline. Additionally, some of the challenges the field is facing may have been experienced and addressed in other sectors.

For this reason, we invited leaders in male contraception and from other fields of practice to contribute their knowledge and experience during a multi-day ideation event facilitated by IDEO, the world's leading human centered design firm, to make sure no time is wasted "reinventing the wheel".

Through this proactive approach, we were able to articulate needs in the field and plan for how we might circumvent foreseeable challenges, with the ultimate goal of achieving efficiency in the development process to allow male contraceptive products to get to market sooner.

The participants of our inaugural ideation event identified the need for continued collaboration, ultimately defined as "Team Science", as a key driver for success. Output from the event included a list of needs within the research community that will inform priority areas for MCI moving forward.

**Read the
Ideation Event Report**



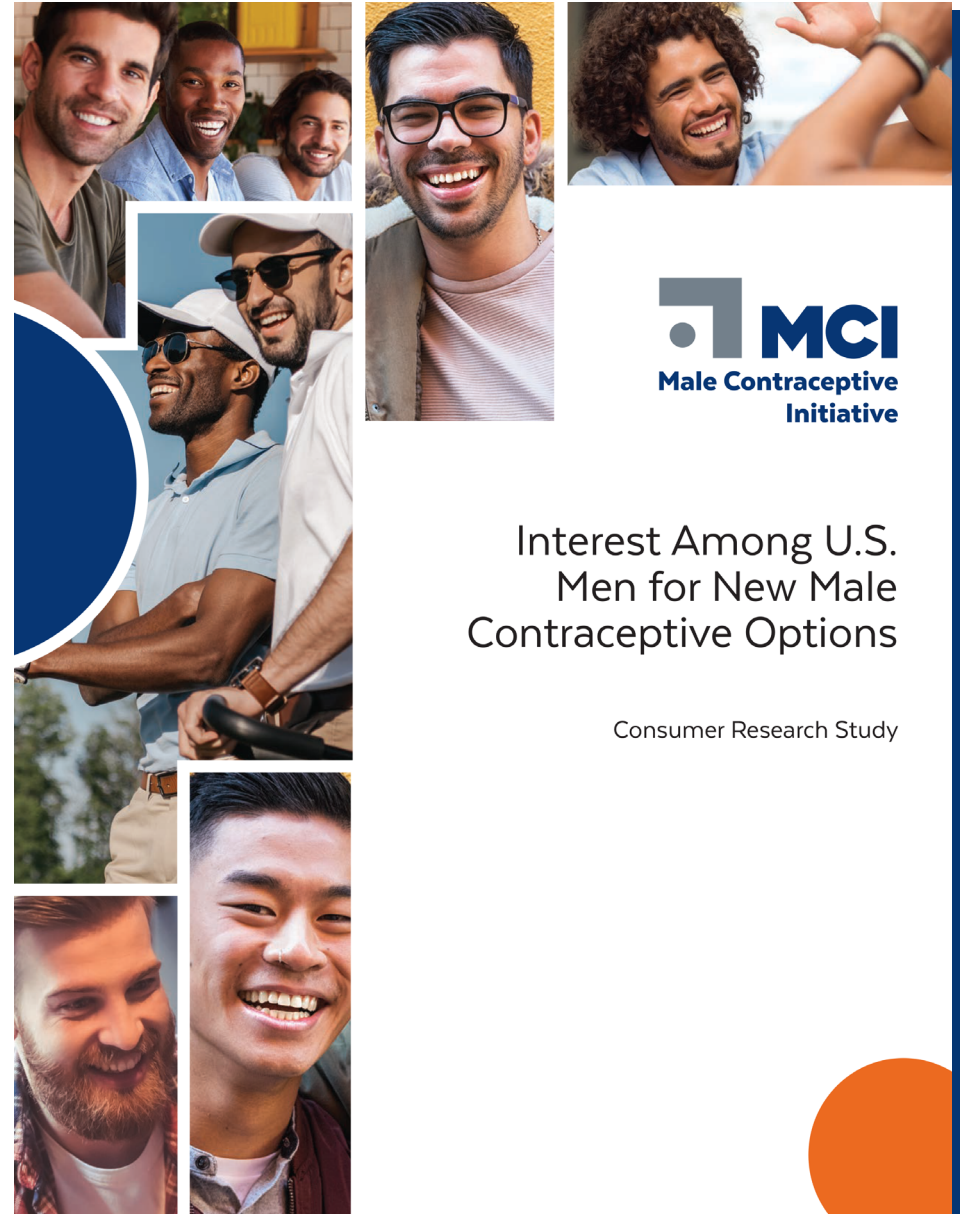
MARKET DEMAND

MCI released its first consumer research study in 2019. It is considered the largest survey in the United States in the last ten years exclusive to sexually active men ages 18-44 to better understand their attitudes, needs, and motivations regarding the future of male contraception as a family planning method.

MCI collaborated with San Francisco-based MLF Marketing to conduct the study and engage with men about their perceptions and needs with respect to male contraception. The results present a quantifiable potential market for novel, new male contraceptives and the findings are considerable:

- There is a potential market of **17 million** men in the United States who are seeking contraception that fits their lifestyle & relationship
- 89% of men report it's important for their contraceptive method to be reversible
- 85% of participants want to prevent their partner from getting pregnant and 60% of those men cite taking responsibility for birth control as the key reason for wanting a new male method
- 82% of men whose partners experienced an unintended pregnancy in the past are interested in new methods of male contraception
- Men are twice as likely to prefer a non-hormonal method (80%) to a hormonal method (38%)

[Read MCI's Consumer Research Study](#)



Interest Among U.S. Men for New Male Contraceptive Options

Consumer Research Study

PARTNER ENGAGEMENT

Youth+Tech+Health (YTH)

MCI understands the importance of the attitudes and opinions of today's youth in shaping the contraceptive options of tomorrow. We worked with the Oakland-based nonprofit Youth + Tech + Health (an initiative from ETR), to explore the body of existing knowledge around male contraception and generate novel solutions for furthering effective development and user engagement in this area.

A key takeaway from this scan is that male contraceptives are positioned within a narrative of male empowerment and sex positivity. This indicates that there is real potential for uptake of new methods that can come along with positive impacts across the spectrum of sexual and reproductive health.

FHI 360

We find that research and development of new male contraceptives is facilitated both through bench science as well as qualitative research, and effective partnerships with like-minded organizations.

To that end, MCI engaged with the international development organization FHI 360 on two separate projects:

- A secondary analysis of focus group discussion data collected in Uganda and Burkina Faso with significant focus on male methods.
- The expansion of a database of targets for contraception to include male methods. These data include risk factors, publications, and de-risking strategies.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

YTH Initiative Enhanced Discovery Scan - MCI

yth youth tech health on etr initiative 1630 San Pablo Ave., Suite 500 Oakland, CA 94612

MCI Male Contraceptive Initiative

**Read the
YTH Enhanced Discovery Scan
Executive Summary**

CONFERENCES & EVENTS

We prioritize participating in conferences, annual meetings, events, and convenings in order to be an active voice in advocating for male contraception research and development. This also affords MCI the opportunity to engage with potential partners and funders more personally, allowing those interested in the field to better understand our passion and commitment for our work and to identify areas to collaborate.

Here are some of the 2019 conferences and events MCI participated in:



**NORTH CAROLINA
SEXUAL HEALTH CONFERENCE**



MEDIA APPEARANCES

Above and beyond advancing the research and development of new male contraceptive methods, we also seek to ensure that fair and accurate information about male contraception is reported on by the media. Over the course of its 5 years, MCI has established itself as a great resource to researchers, media, and the general public at large. In 2019, we continued our strategic media outreach to help inform reporting from established, respected media outlets domestically and internationally.

Here are some of the publications and outlets that MCI contributed to in 2019:



COSMOPOLITAN

**The
Guardian**

**BUSINESS
INSIDER**

OZY



Futurism

IMPACT CASE STUDY

While the primary goal of annual reports is to provide an overview of program activities and financial transparency, it is also a time to reflect on impact. With this in mind, we wanted to take a step back and share the story of the first MCI Fellow, Dr. Aaron Crapster, and the impact that your support allowed us to have in his career development.

Aaron's Journey

Dr. Aaron Crapster was working as a postdoctoral researcher at Stanford University in 2018. Even though his lab wasn't focused on contraceptive research, he was investigating a protein critical for sperm development that could be targeted to develop a new male birth control method. Despite a clear pathway forward, he didn't have the funding to focus on the work.

In 2018, MCI awarded Aaron a Postdoctoral Fellowship. Because of this support, Aaron was able to clear significant scientific research hurdles and prepare to publish his work for the world to see - all within a year. (His paper on HIPK4 was accepted by eLife and will be published in Spring 2020). After completing our program, he received a career-launching job offer from Vibliome Therapeutics, which is an MCI grantee.

Aaron's story is indicative of the landscape MCI wants to create. An ecosystem that is self-sustaining, and fosters opportunities. Opportunities for young researchers to continue their careers in an area they are passionate about, and opportunities for businesses to find talented staff to join them in making male contraceptives a reality.

Watch Aaron discuss the impact MCI has had on his career

Dr. Aaron Crapster
Vibliome Therapeutics





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I want reliable control over my fertility, so I can control the timing and spacing when I have children. At this time in human history, it is a basic right.

**Derek,
comment on MCI's website**



THANK YOU!

Hall of Fame - \$100,000 and up

Anonymous

VIPs - \$1,000 to \$100,000

Dustin Doss

Deborah O'Brien

The Shakes Family Fund

Core Supporters - \$100 to \$1,000

David Sokal

Mitch Eddy

Naveed Ghannad

Wade Gobel

Gail King

The Oldman Starkweather Charitable Fund

Beverly Tucker

Mark Barone

Eugene Mills

Karen Blyth

Bill Friedman & Jill Ryder

Diane Sokal

Lucy Wilson & Christopher Richmond

Robert Gabel

Curt Akins

Heather Vahdat

Adam Bailey

Barbara Booth

Anonymous

Ian Flower

Matthew Hively

Greg Kopf

F.C. Bo Proctor

Ana Maria Salicioni

Susan Sharpless

Paul Sokal

Contributors - \$1 to \$100

Joshua Sokal

Summer Goodson

Jacquie Hughes

Yulia Korolitsky

Megan Christofield

Carolyn Jenkins

Myra Kemna

Mete Kural

Mary Lacombe

Chelsea Polis

Daniel Shane

Lee Werley

Jennifer Ayres

Elaine Booth

Lara Briden

Thomas Aurdal

Helen Bartlett

Andreas Gustafsson

Bob Starr

Lorraine Todd

Sky Van Auke

Rachel Dean

Kyle Anne

Eva Beelmann

Kjell Hoffhenke

Michael Kohler

Stephen McCormick

Peter Romeyn

Charlotte Rose

Benjamin Sokal

Danielle Kedar

Heide Lund

Eric Morris

Carol Hughes

Jerel Bonner

Toby Bradshaw

Joan Drucker

David Meller

Dan Oldman

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MCI BOARD



Back Row (L to R)

David Sokal, MD
Susan Sharpless, MBA
Gregory Kopf, PhD

Front Row (L to R)

Karen Blyth, MS
Michael Rusnak, MS
Deborah O'Brien, PhD
Carolyn Jenkins



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It's about equality for men to have access to something that gives them agency in their reproductive health... Men should be looking after their own reproductive health the way we expect women to.

**Diana,
partner of male contraceptive
trial participant**



We want to hear from you!

Contact

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linkedin.com/company/male-contraceptive-initiative



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