



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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YTH Initiative Enhanced Discovery Scan - MCI



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PRODUCED BY



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## INTRODUCTION AND AIMS

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While men of reproductive age have an interest in pregnancy prevention, current male contraceptive methods leave men with a large unmet need for contraception. The Enhanced Discovery Scan report uses a mixed methods approach to explore the body of existing knowledge around male contraception and generate novel solutions for furthering effective development and user engagement in this area with the following specific aims:

1. Complete a comprehensive literature review of peer-reviewed research and reports conducted within the last eight years. The review cites publications including progress to date in the development of novel methods, related attitudes and perceptions of men and women, barriers to contraceptive access, and existing interventions and approaches to facilitate contraceptive uptake and adherence.
2. Conduct a series of in-depth expert interviews with community stakeholders in order to inform and guide the final analysis of the literature review.
3. Collect and review a comprehensive list of mobile apps and websites related to the categories and themes established and provided by the literature review and community insight interviews.
5. Evaluate the strengths and limitations proposed by youth stakeholders in relation to the current literature.  
Recommend and propose solutions designed to enhance male contraceptive development optimizing the potential of technological support and integration with youth, a portion of the population with interest and need in male contraception as well as transforming contraceptive responsibility and gender roles, centered in the conversation.

## METHODS

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The Enhanced Discovery Scan process carried out by the YTH Initiative consists of the following methodological components:

- » A landscape analysis consisting of three distinct but complementary processes:
  - » A literature review that provides crucial insights into the literature and current state of male contraception based on the insights of experts in the realms of youth health, digital innovations, and content areas similar to male contraception. The intention of this review is to provide a picture of the current state of male contraception, including establishing the need for male contraceptive methods, key themes in the development of novel methods of contraception and related cultural narratives, and opportunities in male contraceptive development informed by current approaches in the field and related work, such as PrEP promotion and telemedicine provision of medication abortion.
  - » 12 expert interviews with health care practitioners, physicians, peer-health educators, adolescent health and tech leaders, contraceptive researchers, and youth health leaders.
  - » A social listening process, and mobile app and website review involving an extensive review of social media platforms, websites, news outlets, and mobile applications to get an in depth understanding of current trends and themes related to male contraception in real time.
- » Two Community Consultations and Youth Centered Health Design Workshops to ground findings in the experiences of youth and gain insights into youth preferences and desired for male contraception.

## KEY FINDINGS

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An Enhanced Discovery Scan has two components a Landscape Review and a series of community consultations and Inspiration workshops. The following key findings present the current landscape related to issues of male contraception.

### Landscape Analysis Key Findings:

#### Literature Review and Expert Interviews

While there are narratives about male contraceptive use that present potential challenges to uptake and investment in development—specifically that men are not interested in using contraception and that women do not trust men to use contraception—there is an established need and interest in novel methods from both men and women globally. Current efforts integrating technology into the delivery and support of medication provision and adherence present successful models for engaging potential consumers in male contraceptive use and addressing current challenges to male contraceptive uptake to ensure that they do not become significant barriers to use in the long run. This review also suggests that to ensure success in men's use of contraception, there must be multiple options available to meet the needs of different populations and these methods should be made accessible with as few restrictions on access as possible.

#### Mobile Application and Website Review + Social Listening

As the demand for contraceptives worldwide continues to increase, technology is providing unique opportunities to address issues of accessibility, adherence, and education. It is well documented that technology has played a pivotal role in sexual health education, increasing access to interventions and preventative medicine, and addressing issues of stigma (Simon et al., 2013). In the United States, access to comprehensive sex education varies significantly from state to state (Guttmacher, 2019), leaving some adolescents without access to quality information on key concerns in sexual and reproductive health. The

use of technology and new forms of digital media, including access to internet-based resources and interventions, has been found to significantly improve the overall understanding, perceptions, and sexual health knowledge for adolescents particularly, addressing their health needs in ways that traditional approaches may not be able to (Simon et al., 2013). Knowing the importance of technology for accessing information and services, the YTH research team used social listening software to scan Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, news outlets, blogs and blog comments, forums, and Wikis over two months to get an in-depth understanding of internet-based conversations centered around issues of male health and contraception. The analysis found that the majority of users engaged on online platforms were perceived to be women and health institutions. Conversations about vasectomies were closely linked to conversations centered around prostate cancer. Twitter was the most active platform on average consistently engaging over 20% of the conversations. Lastly, the mobile application review, website review, and social listening revealed that there are no strong drivers of conversation around male contraception online. No mobile applications for male contraception were available in the Apple Store or Google Play Store. Websites and mobile applications related to contraception were primarily targeting women. The biggest opportunities may lie in connecting with established websites disseminating health information, specifically those focused on adolescent health. Products coming to market would benefit from using strategies of access and convenience that are being used by tech-centered family planning companies.

## Community Consultations and Inspiration Workshops:

The YTH Initiative found that young people in our workshops had many of the same views and concerns emphasized in the existing literature on male contraception around attitudes and beliefs, echoing concerns about stigma, side effects, desires for longer acting methods and multiple options, and from young women some mistrust of men as contraceptive users. But participants also discussed many opportunities for the future of male contraception and a need for and interest in novel methods. Young men seemed interested in taking on contraceptive responsibility and feeling protected during sex, and suggested avenues for promoting novel male contraceptive methods, such as integration in existing sex education resources (including porn sites) and promotion within social networks, that account for the current culture of contraception for young people.

## Recommendations and Solutions:

Based on findings from this Enhanced Discovery Scan, we make the following recommendations for male contraceptive research and development: providing insights into the contraceptive preferences and needs of different men globally and across the lifecycle, and building a culture of positive sexual behaviors and creating a persona for male contraception. We also outline key priorities for each of these recommendations, which ensure that the outcomes of this Enhanced Scan process are taken into account in making future male contraceptive discoveries.

To build knowledge and leverage existing solutions to support male contraception we first suggest a qualitative research approach that prioritizes building a non-prescriptive and deep understanding, a cross-cutting global perspective, and qualitative data that both reflects individual and community-level needs but also synthesizes those into actionable recommendations for investment and development on the global scale. Additionally, we suggest building a hub

spoke model that leverages a variety of technology platforms to address issues of stigma, access, and education as critical advocates for male contraception. Ultimately, if male contraceptives are positioned within a narrative of male empowerment and sex positivity with an understanding of user experiences and preferences and leveraging existing innovations in prevention and integrating technology into health practices, there is real potential for uptake of new methods with positive impacts for sexual and reproductive health outcomes, among other facets of health, for the entire population.