



PMI Community Demonstration Sites

CONDUCTING A CONDOM AUDIT

What is it?

A condom audit explores issues of condom availability and accessibility. This information will be useful in designing both your *audience profile* and your *marketing mix*. By collecting this information, interventions may be designed to lower the costs of and barriers to acquiring condoms, so more of your target audience will use them. It will also help you to shape particular activities and messages through your familiarity with popular brands, attitudes and preferences for particular brands, and the ways and means of getting hold of condoms.

A traditional condom audit tracks condom sales at the retail level, selling prices, display practices, and explains changes in sales levels over time. Coupled with consumer interviews, condom audits can add to consumer profiles of various brands and stores. What we are calling a *condom audit* goes a bit beyond the traditional definition, to include information on *who's getting which condoms where, and why*.

Should we do a condom audit?

The answer is simple: A condom audit should only be carried out if focus group research or information from your sites' situation analysis reveals that condom availability, access and price are problems for your audience. Before conducting any additional research on condoms, it is important to answer "Yes" to the question: "*Do I need more information on condoms?*". *See what you've got; think if you need anything more.*

So the first thing to do is to see what information you've already collected on condom availability. Research subcommittees, together with site staff and TA Consultants, should review focus group results or ask for some preliminary feedback from their research "vendor". What does your target audience have to say about accessing condoms? If your target audience is not sexually active, or if your research identified few barriers to getting hold of condoms, you may not need to conduct a *condom audit*.

How complicated is a condom audit?

A condom audit can be very simple and quick, or more extended and complex. The scope of the audit will depend on what information you need. **Only collect information you need.** What is useful to know? Can you do anything to change the situation, or is it out of your hands? If you “analyze” a situation, and realize there is little PMI can do to change it, then you should not explore this aspect of condom availability (or access) in your condom audit.

For the sexually active, is it difficult for them to get hold of condoms? What are the barriers? How do they acquire condoms? Do they buy them, or get them free? What are the sources of condoms for your target? Does your target audience find price to be a barrier? Are they embarrassed to get condoms? Are condoms placed behind counters in stores so the customer must ask for them? Are there restrictions on sales to juveniles?

If particular access issues come up in the research results, it may be reasonable to conduct just a little research, rather than an extensive audit.

ACSP is available to assist in designing condom audit, reviewing questionnaires, and analyzing data. ACSP staff cannot collect the information. There is no money available to hire anyone to collect this information. Local committees will need to collect information themselves. This may be a good opportunity to involve youth committees.

What methods are used?

A condom audit can be designed to survey a sample of stores (such as drug stores and markets) to observe condom brands, prices and placement; to explore “free” sources of condom distribution; to interview pharmacists, store clerks, or health providers to assess their attitudes; to interview youth on the street to see if they carry condoms, what condition they are in, and if they don’t have them, if they know where to get them. The technique used and the target of the audit will depend on the questions that need to be answered.

As soon as your committee identifies the information you need, your TA Consultant and other ACSP staff will help you to devise the methods and tools for getting that information.

Next steps

- # Set your research objectives. This involves identifying what additional information is needed. Be specific. The attached pages will help to guide your research planning, and ACSP is available to help design or review you plans.

- # Review logistics and costs of conducting the research, and the resources needed.

- # Consider potential Issues Management needs that might come up while conducting this research in the community. Alert your Issues Management Subcommittee, and enlist their assistance in working through a plan.