ABSTRACT TITLE: Why do women in Uganda hold negative beliefs about Intrauterine Devices (IUDs)

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Background: Uganda has one of the highest population growth rates and a high population of 34,856,813 people, 38.7% being Women of Reproductive Age (WRA) (Uganda Population and Housing Census, 2014). This is partly because of the high Total Fertility Rate of 5.4 children per woman (Uganda Demographic Health survey 2016) and the high unmet need for family planning. Despite the growing trend in modern contraceptive use in Uganda (35%), IUD use is a mere 1.5% (UDHS, 2016).

Empirical evidence shows that IUDs are safe and have success rates over 99% among other benefits (Peipert, 2011). Despite the benefits of IUDs, its acceptability is low in Uganda as only 0.4% of sexually active women use IUDs (Uganda Demographic health survey, 2011). Although 87.8% of WRA know of IUDs, more than half incorrectly believe that IUDs can damage the womb (57%), reduce sexual pleasure (54%), and cause cancer (58%) while 48% believe prolonged IUD use can cause infertility (PACE, 2015).

Main question: What then makes women believe IUD causes cancer; damages womb; reduces sexual pleasure and causes infertility?

Methodology: A cross sectional qualitative study employing face to face in-depth spoken narratives among females of age 15-49, users and non-users of IUDs, was conducted in Mbarara, Mukono and Iganga. Users were those with IUDs inserted by the time of the interview while non-users were those without IUD and wouldn’t desire to use it.

Findings:

- **IUD attributes:** Women believe that
  
  - Since IUDs are metallic and stay in the uterus for long, they therefore contact vaginal fluids daily, rust in the uterus, and lead to cervical cancer.
  - Since IUDs are long, they can scratch or perforate the uterus during insertion, causing wounds that may never heal and become cancer.
  - IUD strings can rot when they come into contact with virginal fluids and lead to wounds in the cervix, causing cancer.
  - Since the strings dangle at the cervix, IUDs are inserted closer to the vagina and can be felt by a man during intercourse, reducing sexual pleasure.
• The Uterus is only meant to carry a baby: Women believe God made the uterus too soft and delicate to only carry a baby and inserting any external artificial device will damage the womb.

• Duration in the Uterus: Women believe that artificial external devices can’t stay in place without moving for long, so they’re bound to move within the body and overtime to the fallopian tubes, harming them and causing infertility.

• Not knowing how IUDs prevent pregnancy: Women believe IUDs burn the eggs and sperm before fertilization, which may burn the ovaries and lead to infertility.

Knowledge Contribution: Results imply that behavior Change Communication and mass media messages promoting IUD use must focus on underlying reasons to the negative beliefs as opposed to emphasizing its benefits.