As the world moves ever closer to the start of the Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro with the specter of Zika ominously hanging over the Games, global anxiety continues to build since the news surrounding the virus isn't getting any better.

In Puerto Rico, the first case of Zika-related microcephaly in an unborn child [2] is being reported, an unnerving development following last week's virus fears among players that derailed Major League Baseball's [3] special two-day series. Meanwhile, calls for the Games to be relocated or postponed continue to grow, since Brazil is simultaneously plagued with a teetering economy, political instability, polluted waters at Olympic sites, grossly under-fiananced medical care, all while essentially being Ground Zero for the Zika crisis. And let's not forget a fed-up populace that's taken to the streets in protest. [4]

Amid this discord, efforts to mitigate the Zika threat, deemed a global health emergency by the World Health Organization, are more than welcome.

To that end, two Australian manufacturers have developed an anti-viral prophylactic that will be available to Aussie athletes. Ansell, the second biggest condom maker in the world, in teaming up with the Starpharma, maker of the anti-viral agent, says its product provides "near-complete" protection against the mosquito-spread virus. But unfortunately, while the effort sounds
worthwhile -- and that's part of the effort's appeal -- it's essentially window dressing for a major health concern that's gripped a jittery public.

The anti-viral substance is called VivaGel, which, according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* [5], "has been proven in laboratory studies to neutralise viruses, including HIV and herpes," and "shows near complete protection against Zika in concentrations weaker than those in condoms."

While this sounds all well and good, adding an anti-viral to the condom doesn't really add a level of protection to Zika transmission between sexual partners, mainly because the condom itself already provides the necessary protection. That said, for those living in, or traveling to, Zika-infested regions, condom use is even more essential because many people who have been infected appear asymptomatic and don't even know they have the virus.

"Promoting condom use is always welcome, and we applaud that," said Dr. Lila Abassi, M.D., MPH, Director of Medicine at the American Council on Science and Health. "But as far as the efficacy of this particular product, the data are not very convincing. And not to be overlooked, Starpharma has a major stake in anti-viral lubricants, so it has a lot to gain from the success of Dual Protect if it catches on."

Indeed, there's no downside to these companies making this nationalistic, no-cost gesture, in an effort to support Australia's Olympic athletes. In fact, it's a great public relations move that serves to greatly increase the two manufacturers' visibility at home, and around the globe. And the money spent on production is likely just a fraction of what the two firms would have to pay in advertising for the same level of exposure.

But in the end, using a condom is using a condom -- and again, we're all for that, wholeheartedly so -- but the added anti-viral agent appears to be a very clever, yet unnecessary, feel-good addition to an already-effective product.