Rapid population growth has significant individual, family, societal and environmental effects and contributes to high maternal and infant mortality and morbidity in many developing countries. The contraceptives available today are not suitable to all users and the need to expand contraceptive choices still exists. Concerns over the adverse effects of hormonal contraceptives have led to developing new formulations with improved metabolic profile. Progesterone receptor modulators are highly effective for blocking ovulation and are undergoing investigation. Future developments also include the combination of a contraceptive combined with an antiretroviral agent for both contraception and protection against sexually transmitted infection. Non-hormonal methods are still at an early stage of research, with the identification of specific targets in the testis and ovary, as well as interactions between spermatozoa and ova. It is hoped that the introduction of new methods with additional health benefits would improve access to a wider range of improved contraceptives. Improved access to safe and effective methods will help decrease unsafe abortions, unscheduled pregnancies and maternal mortality.