



Logan Nickels, Ph.D.

Chief Research Officer

Male Contraceptive Initiative (MCI)

**Date** Friday, March 13, 2026

**Time** 12:00 to 1:00 PM

**Location** CBB 108

**Title:** *"Beyond the Pill: Engineering the Future of Male Contraception"*

**Abstract:** For most of the 20th century, the contraceptive burden fell almost exclusively on people who can become pregnant — a historical accident as much as a biological one. Early research into male hormonal suppression showed proof-of-concept but stalled on challenges that were, frankly, engineering problems as much as biological ones. Today, a new generation of approaches is reframing male contraception as an unmet need ripe for biomedical innovation.

The sperm cell offers an unusually rich target environment: post-mitotic, transcriptionally silent, and operating through molecular machinery largely absent from somatic tissues. Targets under active investigation include ion channels essential for motility (CatSper, SLO3), kinases required for spermatogenesis (HIPK4, TSSKs), and soluble adenylyl cyclase (sAC), a key regulator of sperm activation with no close somatic homologs. Despite this target richness, the field has historically lacked investment — a gap the Male Contraceptive Initiative (MCI) was founded to address through strategic funding and advocacy.

**Bio:** Logan Nickels, PhD is Chief Research Officer at the Male Contraceptive Initiative (MCI), the leading nonprofit funder and advocate for non-hormonal, reversible male contraceptive development. He oversees MCI's global grant portfolio and its for-profit subsidiary, the Contraceptive Accelerator Network, working across the full pipeline from target discovery through early clinical translation.

Dr. Nickels trained originally in biochemical mechanisms of bacterial antibiotic resistance, earning his PhD from the University of Oklahoma before completing postdoctoral work at the University of Pennsylvania. He has spent nearly a decade translating that scientific foundation into one of biomedical research's most compelling unmet needs — and building the field infrastructure to go with it. His published work spans contraceptive pharmacology, research ethics, advocacy strategy, and reproductive equity. He co-edits the Emerald Studies in Reproduction, Culture, and Society book series and has been featured in outlets ranging from Nature and Bloomberg to NPR's All Things Considered and the BBC.