References:


“Regardless of whether a child is a boy or a girl, neither should be subject to a tradition which is harmful.” — Jacqueline Smith

*NOCIRC pamphlets: 11 pamphlets: 50¢ each or $30/100 (same or mixed) plus $5 S/H.

The NOCIRC Resource Guide lists the pamphlets, books, articles, newsletters, and videos available from NOCIRC and other resources as well. Free for SASE.

More information can be found at: www.nocirc.org and www.cirp.org

The information in this pamphlet is not meant to replace the care and advice of your pediatrician.
Is circumcision harmful?
Circumcision amputates approximately 50 percent of the heavily innervated skin and mucosa of the penis, tissue that is a specific erogenous zone. Excision of the foreskin renders the remaining skin taut and immovable, eliminates its protective, sensory, and sexual functions, and destroys the gliding action of the foreskin, changing the natural mechanics of normal human reproduction.

Circumcision puts the patient at risk of surgical mishap, adhesions, meatitis, meatal ulceration, infections, bleeding, and even death.

Circumcision is an extremely painful procedure with long-lasting post-operative pain.

Circumcision creates an abnormal physical appearance with a disfiguring scar encircling the shaft of the penis and the glans penis permanently exposed to drying, abrasion, and mechanical injury.

Is circumcision a lawful procedure?
Male circumcision is not unlawful, however, in the absence of a medical indication, it is conceivable that general laws for the protection of children could be applied to non-therapeutic circumcision. As with any surgery, a valid informed consent must be obtained. The power of parents to grant proxy permission to the non-therapeutic excision of healthy functional tissue from a child’s body is unclear and the law, therefore, is unstable.

What information must a physician provide?
A physician, prior to obtaining permission for a circumcision, must provide all relevant and material information about the proposed course of treatment and all relevant and material information about alternative treatments. Information must be provided about the actual extent of amputation, possible benefits, known risks, disadvantages, complications, and possible outcomes. Non-circumcision is a viable alternative to circumcision, so similar information must be provided about non-circumcision.

How long should a physician maintain records relating to an infant circumcision?
Brown recommends that doctors keep records until the child-patient’s 28th birthday.

Must a physician provide a circumcision at parental request?
No. A physician, except in emergencies, may choose whom to serve. Physicians have no obligation to provide ineffective, experimental, or outdated treatment. Doctors may refuse to perform circumcision as a matter of conscience.

Who should make the decision about non-therapeutic circumcision?
Circumcision is a non-therapeutic procedure that is not essential to current wellbeing. Although it is traditional for parents to decide, such procedures should be deferred until the child is of age and can decide for himself. Physicians have a duty to consider the feelings of the child because the child has to live with the consequences of the circumcision.

Is the non-therapeutic circumcision of a child an ethical procedure?
The Norwegian Council for Medical Ethics has advised the Norwegian Medical Association that the circumcision of boys is not consistent with important principles of medical ethics. Canning says there is conflict between circumcision and the legal and ethical duties of medical specialists. The subjection of child-patients to unnecessary non-therapeutic painful procedures is unethical.