U.S. Circumcision Rate Falling
Infant circumcisions in the U.S. decreased 11 percent in just 5 years. Between 1993 and 1998, the number of babies circumcised in U.S. hospitals fell from 1.3 million to 1.1 million. The rate is now about 60%. These figures come from HCIA (Health Care Investment Analysts), which maintains the healthcare industry’s largest database from a variety of sources, including hospitals, managed care and insurance companies, federal and state governments, clinics, physicians’ offices, and patients themselves. According to HCIA representative Beth Waibel, “Because there has not been a matching decrease in the number of male births, we know the change in practice pattern is real.”

UN Grants NOCIRC Roster Status
The Economic and Social Council of the United Nations granted Roster status to NOCIRC in July. NOCIRC now has official representatives at UN Headquarters in New York and the UN office in Geneva. NOCIRC can designate official representatives to attend meetings at the UN’s Vienna office as well. The UN issues a yearly calendar of meetings open to participation by, or of special interest to, non-governmental organizations that have consultative status with the UN. NOCIRC’s participation will be especially important as discussions continue about the relationship between male circumcision and HIV/AIDS in Africa. (NOCIRC will continue to advocate education, hygiene and the use of condoms as the most effective defense against all sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS.) Although the UN recognizes the right of females to keep their genitals intact, it has yet to recognize that same right for males. NOCIRC will work to impel the UN to acknowledge and address the forced and coerced genital cutting of males as a violation of human rights as well.

First Baby of the New Millennium
Born in West Auckland, NZ, one second after midnight, Tuatahi Manaakitanga, which means “First Blessing,” is Maori and, in keeping with Maori tradition, is unlikely to be circumcised—an appropriately wholesome blessing and beginning for babies in the New Millennium!
This year we celebrate our great strides toward protecting the genital integrity of children.

Health Care Investment Analysts (HCIA) documents an 11 percent decline in neonatal circumcision in the U.S. between 1993 and 1998; and the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) aligned itself with medical associations worldwide when it announced in March 1999 that it does not recommend routine neonatal circumcision – finally laying to rest the medical pretexts for genital cutting.

Researchers at the University of Washington Child Health Institute echoed the AAP’s position by stating in their report in Pediatrics (January 2000) that “the risks we report may outweigh the potential benefits,” adding, however, that circumcision is virtually harmless, a claim that ignores the studies and growing body of evidence that clearly show that destroying healthy, normally functioning protective, immunological, erogenous genital tissue harms a male for life.

A month after that report was published, David Reimer (“John/Joan/John”) appeared on Dateline (2/8), Oprah (2/9), and Good Morning, America! (2/10). Now 34, he is the identical twin whose penis was burned off while he was being circumcised when he was 8 months old and was then castrated, sexually “reassigned,” and raised as a girl. At 12, he was given female hormones. At 14, he attempted suicide and was then told he was born a male. Stunned but relieved to learn the truth, he declared himself to be male, had a double mastectomy and two surgeries to construct a penis, and later married. Sharing his heart-rending story on national television was truly heroic.

Other circumcision tragedies are also being exposed. Only by ignoring the suffering they cause and by violating the right of children to keep their sex organs intact and to self-determination can anyone accede to anyone who wants a child’s genitals cut.

Carol Lannon, MD, who headed the AAP Task Force on Circumcision, the other Task Force members, and other informed physicians must now be fully aware that circumcision is more a political than a scientific or medical issue. Surely they are aware that a powerful and vocal contingency within the AAP is determined to denigrate and overturn the Task Force’s statement because it does not recommend routine infant circumcision. Although the AAP’s 1999 Position Statement fails to acknowledge the structure, properties, and functions of the foreskin, the damage cutting it off causes, and the birthright of all human beings to keep their sex organs intact, we applaud the Task Force’s position that it does not recommend routine neonatal circumcision, and we must make that position as widely known as possible.

Our work does not end with the AAP’s 1999 position statement, however. Some researchers are now advocating mass circumcision to prevent HIV/AIDS in Africa, ignoring the low HIV rate in non-circumcising Europe and the high circumcision rate among HIV victims in the U.S. Since the Victorian era, a vocal minority of North American doctors has proclaimed circumcision to be both cure and prophylaxis for whatever happened to be the dreaded disease of the time. AIDS now joins masturbatory insanity, penile cancer, cervical cancer, STDs, and UTI as one of the many diseases circumcision has been claimed to prevent. Because of this latest pretext for promoting circumcision, males in some non-circumcising tribes, such as the Luo, are being blamed for the AIDS epidemic and are being kidnapped, beaten, and circumcised by force.

The Sixth International Symposium on Sexual Mutilations: Securing Human Rights in the 21st Century (see page 8) will address the worldwide educational efforts – and the legal progress we’re making – to protect children from genital cutting, as well as new discoveries about the foreskin itself.

Soon we will reach critical mass and the whole circumcision habit will collapse of its own dead weight.

– Rio Cruz, Ph.D.
Lawsuits and Legislation

CANADA

**Toronto** – Lawrence Barichello, leader of the anti-circumcision lobby group “Intact,” is organizing a class-action lawsuit on behalf of Canadian men circumcised as infants. Named in the suit will be the doctors who circumcised them, nurses and staff who assisted, hospital administrators, manufacturers of the equipment used, and parents. The suit will be launched once suitable candidates and the legal team are coordinated. Participants must be men circumcised in Canada as infants by a doctor for non-religious reasons. Because of the statute of limitations, most candidates will be 17 or 18. *National Post*, 10/22/99.

COLOMBIA

**Bogota** – For the first time in history, a high court has considered whether intersex genital mutilation is a violation of human rights. The Constitutional Court of Colombia issued two decisions (5/12/99 and 8/2/99) that significantly restrict parents and doctors from cutting children born with atypical genitals. The Court concluded that “Intersexed people question our capacity for tolerance and constitute a challenge to the acceptance of difference. Public authorities, the medical community and the citizenry at large have the duty to open up space for these people who have until now been silenced.” Intersex Society of North America (ISNA) Press Release, 10/25/99.

ISRAEL

Legislator Gennady Riegel, representing a Russian immigrant, introduced a bill to prevent after-death circumcision of immigrants (a requirement of Jewish burial) unless they request it in their wills. *NY Times*, 11/10/99.

**Neve-Monosson** – Our petition to the Israeli High Court to declare circumcision illegal was rejected. Three judges decided the evasive reply of the government was enough to make their determination. Contrary to the promise of the first panel of judges, this panel refused to hear our claims and rejected the petition without justifying its decision, falsely claiming that the first petition had been rejected. The first panel had declared it did not want to continue determination on the petition. Neither panel of judges actually addressed the issue. Israeli Association Against Genital Mutilation, 6/1/99.

ITALY

**Milan** – An Egyptian brick-layer convicted by a Milan court of having his daughter circumcised was given a suspended 2-year prison sentence. The unidentified man had his 9-year-old daughter and 5-year-old son circumcised during a trip to Egypt. He sent his wife on vacation so that their children could be cut without her knowledge. Both children needed treatment for serious infections. A trial ensued after the mother called the police. With this ruling, Italy took a stand for the right of females. *The Times*, 11/27/99.

SWEDEN

**Stockholm** – A doctor may have caused the death of a 3-year-old boy he circumcised. When the boy became drowsy and had difficulty breathing, his parents returned to the doctor, who gave their son an injection. When he didn’t improve, his parents took him to a hospital but the boy died before they arrived. The case will be tested legally. *Swedish Daily News*, 12/19/99.

TURKEY

**Kartal (Istanbul)** – The end of an 8-year-old’s penis necrosed after he was circumcised with a laser device at zel Umut Hospital because he was afraid of blood. His parents, who were told that plastic surgeons could reconstruct their son’s penis once he is 18, filed a lawsuit against Dr. mer Faruk Kayiki, the surgeon. *Hurriyet*, 5/25/99.

UNITED KINGDOM

**London** – A Muslim father lost his battle to have his 5-year-old son ritually circumcised against his mother’s wishes. The court of appeals ruled that, although under Islamic law the boy was born a Muslim, “a newborn child does not share the conceptions of the parents.” The judge said it was not in the child’s best interest to be circumcised, with its risk of pain and psychological damage. *The Guardian*, 11/26/99.

UNITED STATES

**Colorado, Denver** – FGM is now a felony in Colorado. Sen. Dorothy Rupert, D-Boulder, brought in doctors, nurses and Colorado’s district attorney to convince colleagues that some immigrants to the state were having their daughters cut. It is also a crime to take a child under 16 out of state to be mutilated. *Denver Rocky Mountain News*, 5/26/99.

**New York** – The Board of Immigration Appeals granted Adelaide Abankwah political asylum on July 9 on the grounds that she feared being genitaly mutilated if she returned to Ghana. *NY Times*, 8/18/99.

**North Dakota** – Attorney Zenas Baer filed a lawsuit on 12/16/99 in Cass County District Court, Fargo, ND, stating, “If the North Dakota statute criminalizing female genital mutilation (N.D.C.C. 12.1-36-01) were gender neutral, Plaintiff Josiah Flatt would not have gone through an unnecessary surgical procedure that has no medical benefit or indication.”

**Tennessee** – A couple is suing Johnson City Pediatrics, Johnson City Medical Center Hospital, and Dr. William Bridgforth for circumcising their son against their wishes. The doctor apologized to the parents – who had “emphatically confirmed” with him their decision not to circumcise – saying he had confused their baby with another child. *Johnson City Press*, 12 March 1999.
Anatomy
“The prepuce is primary, erogenous tissue necessary for normal sexual function.” Cold CJ, Taylor JR. The prepuce. BJU Int 1999 Jan; 83 Suppl 1: 34-44.

Pain
“[E]xposure to prolonged or severe pain may increase neonatal morbidity; infants who experienced pain during the neonatal period (up to 1 month of age) respond differently to subsequent painful events; a lack of behavioral responses (including crying and movement) does not necessarily mean a lack of pain.” American Academy of Pediatrics and Canadian Paediatric Society Policy Statement. Prevention and Management of Pain and Stress in the Neonate. Pediatrics 2000 Feb; (105)2:454-461.

Phimosis
“[P]himosis implies the existence of pathology, where... there is usually none. With an unretractile foreskin, the preputial orifice proper is normal, supple and unscarred; when retraction is attempted it opens like a flower.” Rickwood AM. Medical indications for circumcision. BJU Int 1999 Jan; 83 Suppl 1: 45-51.

“Putative associations between phimosis and diseases such as urinary tract infections or cancer were not made in antiquity and are reflections of modern, geographically isolated social anxieties.” Hodges FM. Phimosis in antiquity and are reflections of modern, geographically isolated social anxieties. World J Urol 1999 Jun;17(3):133-6.

STDs, HIV, and AIDS
“Women with uncircumcised current partners are not at increased risk for BV.” Zenilman JM, Fresia A, Berger B, McCormack WM. Bacterial vaginosis is not associated with circumcision status of the current male partner. Sex Transm Infect 1999 Oct;75(S):347-8.

“A meta-analysis was performed on the 29 published articles where data were available. When the raw data are combined, a man with a circumcised penis is at greater risk of acquiring and transmitting HIV than a man with a non-circumcised penis.” Van Howe RS. Circumcision and HIV infection: review of the literature and meta-analysis. Int J STD AIDS 1999 Jan; 10(1): 8-16.

“[N]o solid epidemiological evidence has been found to support the theory that circumcision prevents STDs or to justify a policy of involuntary mass circumcision as a public health measure...the medical literature does not support the theory that circumcision prevents STDs.” Van Howe RS. Does circumcision influence sexually transmitted diseases?: a literature review. BJU Int 1999 Jan; 83 Suppl 1: 52-62.

Psychological Issues

“The potential social consequences of circumcision are profound...circumcision has become a political issue in which the feelings of infants are unappreciated and secondary to the feelings of adults, who are emotionally invested in the practice.” Goldman R. The psychological impact of circumcision. BJU Int 1999 Jan; 83 Suppl 1: 93-102.

Sexual Function

“I have had both intact and circumcised lovers and find the intact to embody the difference between a symphony and monotone. However, when one is in love with a circumcised man, that monotone can be like a Tibetan bell – holding all the sounds of the universe in a single tone.” – Jeannine Parvati Baker

Religious Issues
“Now is the time to lay the knife aside and to move forward into the 21st century with a form of ritual that is truly welcoming and that is truly purely symbolic.” Goodman J. Jewish circumcision: an alternative perspective. BJU Int 1999 Jan; 83 Suppl 1: 22-7

Ask Medicaid To Stop Paying for Contraindicated Infant Circumcision
Your tax dollars pay for the medically contraindicated circumcision of children in most states in the U.S. If Medicaid in your state pays, contact your Department of Social Services and state legislators and tell them the AAP does not recommend circumcision and you object to your tax dollars paying for cutting the genitals of babies. Ask for the name and title of the person you talk to.

Medicaid refuses to pay for infant circumcision in California, Mississippi, Nevada, North Dakota, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Guam. Medicaid in Kansas and Washington, DC, have not yet responded to NOCIRC inquiries.

Please send a copy of your correspondence to Amber Craig (NOCIRC of NC, POB 5081, Chapel Hill, NC 27514), coordinator of the Medicaid initiative.
Legal Issues
“The medical community is violating the law through a combination of faulty medical opinion, negligence and inadequate consent. Circumcision amputates the prepuce from the penis, resulting in a permanent alteration in the anatomy, histology and functional integrity of the penis...horrific complications have been recorded in the medical literature. For circumcision of a non-consenting minor to be legally valid there must be a clear and immediate medical necessity; unsolicited, uncoerced, fully informed parental consent; and a determination that it is in the child’s best interest. It must be shown to a reasonable degree of certainty that the child would, upon attainment of the age of reason, desire circumcision for himself. For circumcision to be permitted as a religious ritual, it would need to be demonstrated that the child is virtually certain to practice that religion upon attaining the age of reason and that the child will suffer in some way from having the decision reserved for him to make as an adult. Circumcision as currently practiced on non-consenting minors fails to meet that criteria.” Van Howe RS, Svoboda JS, Dwyer JG, Price CP. Involuntary circumcision: the legal issues. BJU Int 1999 Jan; 83 Suppl 1: 63-73.

Another Tragedy

Circumcision of either sex in the neonatal period should be seen for what it is, a tribal ritual.
– N.R.C. Robertson, “Care of the Normal Term Newborn Baby,” Textbook of Neonatology, 3rd Ed.

American Academy of Pediatrics
“Existing scientific evidence demonstrates potential medical benefits of newborn male circumcision; however, these data are not sufficient to recommend routine neonatal circumcision...To make an informed choice, parents of all male infants should be given accurate and unbiased information.” American Academy of Pediatrics. Task Force on Circumcision. Circumcision policy statement. Pediatrics 1999 Mar; 103(3): 686-93.

Editor’s note: “Accurate and unbiased information” would include the many complications of circumcision documented in the medical literature – which the AAP’s own report ignores. (See “Medical Journal Articles Documenting the Complications of Circumcision” at www.SexuallyMutilatedChild.org/compli.htm.) What would impel the AAP to acknowledge these complications?

Report Circumcisers
Doctors who retract a child’s foreskin or who circumcise a child without medical indication should be reported to their state medical licensing boards. Information about how to do this is at www.cirp.org/library/legal/. Scroll down to the link to the Federation of State Licensing Boards for the address of the doctor’s state board. Every two years, when physicians apply to be recredentialed, they are asked: “Have you ever had a complaint filed against you with the licensing and disciplinary board?” Physicians must then acknowledge any complaints against them.

AFRICA
Guinea – Renouncing genital cutting, dozens of people, mainly women, handed in their knives at a ceremony that drew a crowd of thousands. Spokeswoman Haja Wudu Barrie said the gesture came after 14 years of campaigning. Women from a secret society that once kept FGM alive are now dedicated to its abolition. Anyone convicted of performing FGM faces life imprisonment. Agence France-Presse, 11/9/99.

Kenya – Twenty-five teachers in Garissa and Thika asked for police protection because they were threatened with circumcision by force if they did not “volunteer” and pay for their own mutilation. The Nation, 6/11/99.

Lusaka, Zambia – More and more Zambian men are having themselves circumcised because they have been told it will lower their risk of contracting STDs. Only a few Zambian ethnic groups practice circumcision, which many associate with foreign Jewish and Muslim communities. More parents are reported to be having their male children circumcised to protect them from AIDS. Panafrican News Agency, 7/29/99.

Continues
ALGERIA

Ouzra – Security forces in Algeria say 17 people were killed in an attack on a house where a young boy had just been circumcised. Attacks by armed Islamic groups on such ceremonies are said to be common. BBC News, 8/22/99.

CANADA

The Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information reports that 16 babies were circumcised in Newfoundland and Labrador during the fiscal year 1997-1998, 5 less than during 1996-1997.

The Nova Scotia Department of Health reports that the neonatal circumcision rate for 1999 was 2.1%.

CHINA

Hong Kong – Speaking at the Hong Kong Winter Surgical Forum, Professor Paul Kwong-hang Tam, chair and chief, pediatric surgery, University of Hong Kong and Queen Mary Hospital, said, “A massive public education program is needed because too many boys (5-6%) are losing their foreskins because their parents lack information.” South China Morning, 3/3/99.

GERMANY

Frankfurt – (I)ntact posted 10,000 posters throughout the Federal Republic to raise public awareness about FGM. Founder Christa Muller formed (I)ntact after the wife of Benin’s president appealed to her to help stop the cutting. (I)ntact hopes to stop FGM in the Federal Republic, but its main efforts are directed toward Africa, where it provides support to local organizations. The Week in Germany, 3/26/99.

KOSOVO

Dragash – The Turkish KFOR battalion is circumcising Muslim boys 5 to 7 years old. Because many boys could not be circumcised in recent years, the Turkish Army medical team has given priority to boys between 5 and 7, but if called upon, will begin circumcising younger boys. Central Europe Online, 8/27/99.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Glengormley – NOCIRC of NI received endorsement by the UK National Lotteries Board. NOCIRC Director Linda Massie said, “We are pleased that after 3 years of volunteer work, we have been awarded a grant to help us work for children’s rights.” 7/4/99.

SAUDI ARABIA

Riyadh – A cook who circumcised 15 boys with unsterile instruments was arrested by Saudi police. Mohieddin Khaled al-Illiui, an undocumented immigrant from Syria, was circumcising boys with scissors, electric wires and dirty cotton buds. The Times, 9/6/99.

SOUTH AFRICA

Pietersburg – Northern Province Health Department said it would monitor “circumcision schools” closely during July holidays to reduce serious injuries. About 100 boys are hospitalized each year, and health authorities are concerned about the risk of HIV/AIDS infections because the oft-used razor blades are not sterilized. The Citizen, 7/6/99.

East Cape – Seven more initiates died at circumcision schools; another 40 were hospitalized. Some who died had been assaulted, said to Chauke Ngoma, director of health. Earlier, 3 initiates died from complications and 18 were treated for septicaemia. The Citizen, 7/22/99.

Johannesburg – Four boys died and 100 were hospitalized for hemorrhage or infection after Xhosa rites of passage circumcision ceremonies in Transkei. The Health Ministry’s threat to prosecute traditional surgeons who fail to maintain good hygiene has had little effect. The Guardian, 1/7/00.

UNITED KINGDOM

London – Health authorities could save up to £150,000 a year by using alternatives to circumcision to treat phimosis, reports NORM-UK. Its survey found that 9 out of 10 UK circumcisions are for phimosis and that the procedure is poorly regulated. Nursing Times, 10/20/99.

UNITED STATES

California, Los Angeles – NORM-SoCal (National Organization of Restoring Men of Southern California) was honored by the City of Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles, the State of California, the Congress of the U.S., and the local self-help community for its contributions and service to the community. Recipient of the Dona True Award of SHARE (Self-Help and Recovery Exchange) on behalf of NORM-SoCal was Steven E. Michaud, former coordinator of NORM. 9/16/99.

Washington, D.C. – The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology issued recommendations on counseling and treating genitaly mutilated women. Many doctors don’t know how to treat complications like severe pain, infections and difficult childbirth. Co-authored by Dr. Nawal Nour, African Women’s Clinic, Brigham and Women’s Hospital, Boston, the recommendations are being sent to all medical schools and ob-gyn residency programs in the U.S. and Canada. AP, 9/18/99.
ANNOUNCEMENTS
Sixth International Symposium on Sexual Mutilations, 7-9 December 2000, University of Sydney. (See page 8.)

Stop Infant Circumcision Society is demonstrating at the U.S. Capitol April 1. More information: sicsociety@sicsociety.org.

BOOKS, BOOKLETS, JOURNALS, NEWSLETTERS, REPRINTS AND MORE

In Hebrew. Af-Milah, POB 207, rosh-Pina 12000, Israel. Af-mila@canaan.co.il.

Hermaphrodites with Attitude. Intersex Society of North America. $35/year. ISNA, POB 3070, Ann Arbor, MI 48106. info@isna.org.


The NOCIRC (Australia) Newsletter. NOCIRC of Australia, POB 248, Menai Central, NSW 2234, Australia. Fax: +61-9543 0510.

Your tax-deductible donation will help ensure NOCIRC’s continued success. Thank you.


Restore Yourself! A Handy Kit for Circumcised Men. $27.95 ppd. 30-day money-back guarantee. RestoreYourself.com or Norm Cohen, NOCIRC of Michigan, POB 333, Birmingham, MI 48012. Tel: 248-642-5703.


VIDEOS
Circumcision? Intact Facts. 18-minutes. VHS. $44.05. Injoy Productions, 3970 Broadway, Suite B4, Boulder, CO 80304. Tel: 303-447-2082.

Facing Circumcision: Eight physicians tell their stories and discuss the ethical dilemmas of physicians who circumcise newborns. 20 minutes. VHS. $25 ppd. Nurses for the Rights of the Child, 369 Montezuma #354, Santa Fe, NM 87501. Tel: 505-989-7377.

Restoration in Focus: An Instructional Video. 35-minutes. PAL format. NORM-UK, POB 71, Stone, Staffordshire ST15 0SF UK.


Sixth International Symposium on Sexual Mutilations: Securing Human Rights in the 21st Century
University of Sydney, Australia, 7-9 December 2000

Legal experts, health-care professionals, medical researchers, and scholars from Australia, Brazil, Egypt, Europe, Korea, New Zealand, and North America will address the medical, legal and human rights aspects of male and female sexual mutilations. All presentations will be in English. The symposium will be interpreted into Australian Sign Language.

Registration postmarked by November 15: U.S. funds, $50/half-day, $100/full day, $250/full program.
Please make checks payable to: NOCIRC, POB 2512, San Anselmo, CA 94979-2512 USA.

After November 15, on-site registration only:
Australian funds, $80/half-day, $175/full day, $400/full program.

Registration fee exclusive of accommodation and catering.

For program flier with registration form, send SASE to NOCIRC.

Continuing Education: CEUs for nurses provided. CMEs applied for and pending program approval.

Accommodation suggestions:
University of Sydney, Sancta Sophia College, 8 Missenden Road, Camperdown NSW 2050.
Tel: 9577 2333. Fax: 9577 2388. Single Aus$50/day, Twin Aus$40/person/day.
Ensuite add Aus$5. 10% Goods and Services Tax (GST). Complimentary breakfast.

Oakford City West (opposite Sancta Sophia), 23-33 Missenden Road, Camperdown NSW.
Tel: 02 9557 6100. Fax: 02 9557 6099. One- and two-bedroom units. Mention symposium for special rates.
Website: http://humlog.homestead.com/NOCIRC_OZSYMPOSIUM/nocirc.html