“Genital Integrity Awareness Week” Launched

The International Coalition for Genital Integrity (ICGI) launched Genital Integrity Awareness Week – April 1st to 7th (April is Child Abuse Prevention Month) – in Washington, DC. Beginning with a NOCIRC conference, “Genital Integrity: A New Awareness,” and continuing with marches to and demonstrations on the steps of the Capitol, human rights organizations joined together to bring greater awareness to a crucial human rights issue. (See photos at www.nocirc.org/news.)

Medicaid Report Exposes Wasteful Spending

Tax Dollar Funding of Medically Unnecessary Circumcisions Through Medicaid, a comprehensive ICGI study that reports more than $35 million is spent annually on unnecessary circumcision, was delivered to every member of Congress on April 2 by ICGI members. The packet included a petition signed by the directors of 47 human rights and genital integrity organizations, asking the government to stop using federal tax dollars for medically unnecessary circumcision. Six state Medicaid programs do not fund circumcision. State Medicaid programs that reimburse doctors more than $60 to perform a circumcision report a near-double circumcision rate than states reimbursing less than $50. (For more information see www.icgi.org.)

The sexual rights of future generations will be won by the actions of a small but rapidly growing minority of human rights activists who brave ignorance, ridicule, conformity, and their own instinctive need for denial to respond to a human being’s highest calling: the defense of the powerless.
– Rich Winkel, 2/2/01

18-year-old Files Lawsuit Against His Circumciser

Shortly before his 19th birthday, William Stowell filed a lawsuit in New York, suing the doctor and hospital responsible for circumcising him shortly after birth, saying the operation caused him excruciating pain and lasting sexual harm. He claims his pain threshold has been reduced and his ability to sexually satisfy women has been unalterably harmed. Stowell is asking $75,000 in damages. His mother, Linda Stowell, argues that she signed a consent form given to her when she was under the influence of post-operative medication, a form she says she never would have signed had she not been sedated. Stowell’s attorney, David Llewellyn, has won significant settlements in wrongful circumcision cases, which are becoming more prevalent as men recognize the harm and sexual dysfunction caused by their circumcision.

Dad Protects Son in New Jersey Lawsuit

A divorcing couple who went to court over the circumcision of their 3-year-old son settled the dispute on January 24, 2001, when the boy’s mother withdrew a request to have the surgery performed. The boy’s father, Jim Price, said, “I’m just happy that everything’s over...We all won, because we don’t have to carry this fight forward.” See NOCIRC’s brief, filed on behalf of the boy at www.nocirc.org/legal/brief.html.
This past year has brought our greatest achievements for children’s rights. The Sixth International Symposium on Genital Integrity at the University of Sydney, Australia, in December, received international media coverage. CNN’s interview with Shelton Walden (NOCIRC of NY) aired in 29 countries, and the symposium was covered by ABC News, Associated Press, CNN International, the Sydney Herald, Melbourne Age, The Independent (South Africa), The Times of India, Malaysia International New Agency, as well as several South Korean news agencies that announced the Human Rights Award of the International Symposia presented to DaiSik Kim, Myung-Geol Pang, and Sae Chul Kim for their work to protect South Korean males.

Genital Integrity Awareness Week (GIAW) in Washington, DC, was a glowing success. Our march to the Capitol and demonstration on April 1 were staged to emphasize the right of all children to protection under the Constitution, and our demonstration the next day in front of the Supreme Court was to bring focus to the unconstitutionality of our federal law against female genital mutilation because of its gender bias. NOCIRC centers across the nation held conferences and demonstrations during GIAW to enhance our educational outreach. As usual, US media coverage was meager. Our media reports human rights violations in other countries but is remiss in addressing or exposing our own. To his credit, Patrick McGrath of Fox News interviewed conference presenters for his report on circumcision, which aired May 2 (for a VHS copy, contact Mark Sherman: dancepartner@juno.com).

Sadly, we suffered two big losses this year. David McKnight, who helped name NOCIRC in 1985 and was director of NOCIRC of Iowa until he suffered a head injury a decade ago, died on 8/9/00. Then, John Erickson died 2/6/01. John was Associate Editor of the NOCIRC Annual Report, and he created two websites – his legacy – www.SexuallyMutilatedChild.org and www.foreskin.org. As one person wrote: “In all my years of academic research, I have never come across a source of information – on any topic – as powerful, insightful, thorough, and thought-provoking as your website on circumcision.” Another said, “Thank you for your site; it is a clarion call to sanity. Your illumination and pursuit of truth as well as your despair at those who cause suffering is humanity at its finest.”

On a happier note, I received NurseWeek magazine’s “Nursing Excellence Awards 2001” award at a banquet in Los Angeles on May 11. The awards are given to nurses who have “brought something unique and enduring to their chosen fields.” I was nominated in the category of Patient Advocacy, and “Recognized for outstanding advocacy for the past 22 years on behalf of those among us who are the most vulnerable and unable to protect themselves, infants and children.” Every nurse in California received the NurseWeek issue that mentioned the award, my work, and NOCIRC – an important outreach to nurses. (My acceptance speech is at www.nocirc.org/AwardsSpeech.html)

We have encouraging news from Health Care Investment Analysts (HCIA), which now documents a 57% neonatal circumcision rate. The continuing decline in circumcision illustrates the success of our efforts to protect infants and children. Thanks to one and all!

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**Letter from the Editor**

BELGIUM
Brussels – Shortly after circumcision, 14-month-old Sekou Bayou died. The nurse in charge of the recovery room was accused by the hospital and immediately fired. Dinsdag, 7/18/00.

CANADA
Ontario – A malpractice lawsuit, filed by Tadeusz Szewscyk, 47, alleges circumcision left him depressed, disfigured, and unable to have sex. After Dr. Paul Hanson circumcised him in 1997, Mr. Szewscyk, who used to have sex “four or five times a week,” cannot maintain an erection, his wife said. National Post, 3/8/01.

IRELAND
The Labour Party published a bill to ban FGM, following concerns that FGM is being carried out in Ireland. The Irish Times, 3/8/01.

ITALY
Rome – Heightened awareness about FGM would save lives according to speakers at a conference organized by former EU commissioner Emma Bonino. She asked for government support to create a trust fund to help NGOs in Africa. Women for Development’s Daniela Colombo singled out Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Nigeria, and Gambia as leaders of change. Sapa - AFP, 3/3/01.
SWEDEN
Gothenburg – A father was prosecuted for physical abuse after arranging circumcision of his 3-year-old son. The mother said it was done without her consent while the boy was visiting his father. Helsingborg Dagblad – 3/29/00.
Stockholm – District attorney Eva Regner charged a doctor with involuntary manslaughter because a 3-year-old boy died in 8/99 after getting too much anesthesia for circumcision. Radio Stockholm, 2/9/01.

UNITED STATES
Baton Rouge, LA – Mary Ann Turner, circumcised without consent in 1979, was awarded $35,000. Turner sued her ex-husband, Dr. Alan Ostrowe, claiming he conspired to remove her foreskin during other surgery. She said she found out when another physician told her in 1988. The Advocate Online, 4/10/01.
Lansing, Michigan – Rep. Judith Scranton introduced HB 4006, “No Medicaid Coverage for Circumcision” (1/10/01), which states: “Notwithstanding any other provision of this act, a circumcision is not a service provided with public funds to a recipient of welfare benefits...or through any other type of public aid or assistance program.”
Dallas, TX – Charlie Hardy and Randi Harland accepted $23,000 in an out-of-court settlement after their son was circumcision by obstetrician, Roosevelt Taylor, MD, against their wishes. Fox4online (www.fox4online.com), 7/9/00.
Seattle, WA – A circumcision infection and negligent medical care left the son of Gary and Beverly Sweet severely brain-damaged and blind. The doctor and hospital devastated their son, “lost” his medical records, and an incompetent attorney failed to properly try the case. Legal and medical malpractice attorney, Mark Johnson, who represented the Sweets in a successful lawsuit against the attorney, said, “To me the Sweets are heroic figures...they confronted two of society’s most powerful institutions: the medical system and the legal system. They fought for 13 years until they prevailed.” Johnson Flora Press Release, 3/8/00.

SOCIOLOGY
Doctors fail to provide adequate information about circumcision, according to a California School of Professional Psychology study, and parents of intact boys are subjected to medical disapproval, causing them to feel less satisfied with their decision. Adler R, Ottaway MS, Gould S. Circumcision: we have heard from the experts; now let’s hear from the parents. Pediatrics 2001 Feb;107(2):E20.

Pediatricians are more aware of current indications for circumcision than surgeons, according to results of a questionnaire sent to all NHS hospital consultants in Yorkshire, UK. Surgeons are more inclined to recommend circumcision. Farshi Z, Atkinson KR, Squire R. A study of clinical opinion and practice regarding circumcision. Arch Dis Child 2000 Nov;83(5):393-6.

Sweden’s top medical journal published a debate led by Dr. Ynge Hofvander’s plea for society to respect the right of every child, whether of immigrant parents or not, to protection from genital cutting. He defended his position against those convinced the Swedish health service should provide for religious circumcision. The series of articles include:

Hofvander Y, Olsen L. A reply: rights of the children are more important than parents’ right to the circumcision of their children. Lakartidningen 2000 Jul 26;97(30-31):3408.
Hofvander Y, Olsen L. Conclusive comment: our hopes are toward a more open religious attitude. Lakartidningen 2000 Sep 6;97(36):3919.
Olsson B. Circumcision of boys – a not-a-problem in which many are involved. Lakartidningen 2000 Sep 6;97(36):3920.
Rubinstein E. Circumcision should and will be discussed. Lakartidningen 2000 Sep 6;97(36):3920.
Hofvander Y. Circumcision – Sweden as (questionable) international model. Lakartidningen 2001 Jan 31;98(5):474.


PAIN
PHIMOSIS
A.M.K. Rickwood and colleagues at Alder Hey Children’s Hospital, Liverpool, clarify pathological phimosis as a specific condition, balanitis xerotica obliterans, which affects only 0.6% of boys, and could eliminate 6000 unnecessary circumcisions annually. Rickwood AMK, Kenny SE, Donnell SC. Towards evidence-based circumcision of English boys: survey of trends in practice. BMJ 2000 Sep 30;321(7264):792-3.


Topical clobetasol 0.05% once a day for 4-6 weeks can be recommended as primary treatment of phimosis in boys without scarification of the foreskin. Klyver H, Mortensen SO, Klarskov OP, Christiansen P. Treatment of phimosis with a steroid cream in boys. Obstet Gynecol Surv 2001 Feb;56(2):114-7.

More Tragedies


Circumcision is leading cause of genital trauma in newborns, according to doctors at The Floating Hospital for Children, Boston, including degloving injuries (Gomco clamp), glans injuries (Mogen clamp), laceration, and division of ventral urethra before placement of Gomco clamp. Patel HI, Moriarty KP, Brisson PA, Feins NR. Genitourinary injuries in the newborn. J Pediatr Surg 2001 Jan;36(1):235-9.


Most penile adhesions from circumcision resolve spontaneously, according to researchers at Cleveland Clinic Foundation, OH, who advise against lysing, except perhaps when they involve the circumcision line. Ponsky LE, Ross JH, Knipper N, Kay R. Penile adhesions after neonatal circumcision. J Urol 2000;164(2):495-6.


STDs

THE “FORESKINS-CAUSE-AIDS” HOAX


Szabo and Short call for mass circumcision of teen boys, suggesting the foreskin’s rich investment with Langerhans cells – one of the body’s key immunological defense mechanisms – is to blame for AIDS. Szabo R, Short RV. How does male circumcision protect against HIV infection? BMJ 2000 Jun 10;320(7249):1592-4.

Following a pro-circumcision literature review, authors from London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine deduce male circumcision is associated with reduced risk of HIV infection among men in sub-Saharan Africa, and suggest circumcision in areas where men are not traditionally circumcised. Weiss HA, Quigley MA, Hayes RJ. Male circumcision and risk of HIV infection in sub-Saharan Africa: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *AIDS* 2000 Oct 20;14(15):2361-70.

**ETHICS**

Experts explain the illegality of routine circumcision, concluding: “Amputating a highly sensitive and functional part of the body is extremely intrusive and should be undertaken only in situations of urgent necessity. Neonatal circumcision as it is routinely performed in this country clearly does not satisfy this criterion. It is therefore unethical and unlawful, and no parental permission for the procedure should be effective.” Svoboda JS, Van Howe RS, Dwyer JG. Informed consent for neonatal circumcision: an ethical and legal conundrum. *J Contemp Health Law Policy* 2000 Winter;17(1):61-133.

**MEDICAL HALL OF SHAME**


*Pediatrics* published another article by Schoen, who reviewed records of infants born in 12 Kaiser Permanente hospitals in California (1996-97). He reported UTI incidence in the first year of life as 2.15% in intact males, 0.22% in circumcised males, and 2.05% in females. With invalid findings because he included premature infants and those with urinary tract anomalies in the “intact” group, and with a minuscule difference between the groups, Schoen still touts circumcision as a preventive health measure. Schoen EJ, Colby CJ, Ray GT. Newborn circumcision decreases incidence and costs of urinary tract infections during the first year of life. *Pediatrics* 2000 Apr;105(4 Pt 1):789-93.


In a penile cancer review article, Spanish doctors unscientifically and unethically promote circumcision, claiming: Given the demonstrated relationship between carcinoma of the penis and hygiene, and phimosis which makes hygiene difficult, circumcision should be performed in childhood. Sanchez Merino JM, Parra Muntaner L, Jimenez Rodriguez M, et al. Epidermoid carcinoma of the penis. *Arch Esp Urol* 2000 Nov;53(9):799-808.


**American Medical Association**

After reviewing 338 studies published from 1966-99, the American Medical Association formalized a policy against routine circumcision of newborn males, calling it a “non-therapeutic” procedure performed for social reasons. *Alternative Medicine*, 9/11/00.

**AFRICA**

*Iten, Kenya* – Ednah and Beatrice Kandie (17 and 15) challenged the legality of FGM in Kenya and won their landmark case, which prevents their father, Pius, from forcing them to undergo FGM. The father says he will respect the decision, and his wife supported her daughters. Magistrate Daniel Ochenja’s judgment said, “Female genital mutilation is repugnant to justice and morality and is outdated in any society, especially 21st century society.” *Sunday Telegraph*, 12/17/00.

*Nairobi, Kenya* – A 13-year-old member of the Luhya tribe of Western Kenya collapsed after a tribal elder mistakenly cut off his penis in a botched circumcision. *Reuters*, 9/9/00.

**CANADA**

*Edmonton, Alberta* – The Alberta military uses foreskins to develop an antidote for chemical warfare. Military scientists and doctors should get permission from parents, says Dr. Jan Storch, president, National Council on Ethics in Human Research. Parents are only told about the fate of the flesh if they ask. *Globe and Mail*, 2/19/01.

*Downsview, Ontario* – “Some amount of bleeding is a necessary part of the ritual circumcision. To suggest that I do them without any bleeding is damaging to my reputation in the Jewish community.” Aaron Jesin, MD, *Globe and Mail*, Letters, 12/9/00.

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continues
We want to spare them the pain." clinics, said "Babies suffer in a traditional circumcision tradition." Zvi Paltiel, who has opened circumcision thesia, he said, "This too is forbidden by Jewish that the edge of foreskin be ripped using the fingernail, gloves, but Jewish law prohibits it because it "requires many parents want the circumciser to wear surgical doctors to apply for certification to perform circumci- – The health ministry plans to allow Israeli – The East Cape health department is Bisho, East Cape SOUTH AFRICA Bortho, Ontario – The Association for Genital Integrity (AGI) plans to launch a court challenge aimed at banning routine infant circumcision. The Criminal Code of Canada prohibits FGM, and AGI contends it discriminates against males by not providing equal protec- under the law. AGI correspondent, April 2001. Ontario – A Federal Court judge delayed deportation of a Nigerian mother because her 19-month-old daughter might be cut if they return to West Africa. She may now apply for Canadian residency. National Post, 2/28/01. EGYPT Beni Suef – Several million women in a country of 65 million people are repudiating FGM. With UN and US money, Egypt’s Ministry of Health has begun extensive education campaigns, pushing to get activists into main- stream media. Post-Gazette, 2/25/01. INDONESIA Kesui – Muslim extremists forced hundreds of people to undergo FGM or MGM with kitchen knives or razor blades as Kesui island was “purified” of Christians. Los Angeles Times, 3/13/01. ISRAEL Jerusalem – Israeli scientists have developed artificial skin from foreskins to close open sores. Foreskins are also used in Israel to produce Interferon, a cancer-fight- ing substance. AFP, 9/20/00. Jerusalem – The health ministry plans to allow Israeli doctors to apply for certification to perform circumci- sion. Rabbi Yosef Weisberg, a certified mohel, said many parents want the circumciser to wear surgical gloves, but Jewish law prohibits it because it “requires that the edge of foreskin be ripped using the fingernail, and you can’t do this wearing gloves.” Regarding anes- thesis, he said, “This too is forbidden by Jewish tradition.” Zvi Paltiel, who has opened circumcision clinics, said “Babies suffer in a traditional circumcision. We want to spare them the pain.” BMJ 2001 Jan; 322:10. PHILIPPINES Jagna – Two groups from United Church of Christ pro- provided free tuli (circumcision) operations in Mayana and neighboring communities, where some 74 boys lined up for the “rites to manhood.” Bohol Sunday Post, 5/7/00. SOUTH AFRICA Bisho, East Cape – The East Cape health department is awaiting President Thabo Mbeki’s signature to regulate traditional circumcision, curtailing the circumcision of boys under 18 years and ensuring their health before undergoing the rite. East Cape News, 4/9/01. Umtata – One boy died and 24 others were hospitalized in serious condition in eastern South Africa after botched circumcisions at an initiation school. There were fears that penises were amputated, according to Inspector Mabhelo Ngame. National Post, 7/1/00. Cape Town – Hospital authorities expected an influx of males injured during tribal ceremonies, as the Xhosa tribe’s circumcision season began. Two men died and another was in serious condition after accidentally cutting off his own penis. Sunday Herald Sun, 12/31/00. SWEDEN Stockholm – Parliament passed a bill, requiring circumci- sion to be done by qualified medical professionals, with exemption for Jewish babies 2 months old or less. Mem- bers of Parliament recognized circumcision as a human rights issue, mandating the Social (Health and Welfare) Committee study and evaluate the issue, and report its findings in four years. Correspondent, 6/1/01. TURKEY Ankara – When they got to the last two, health workers who had circumcised more than 200 boys in western Turkey, cut off too much, and both boys underwent surgical repair. Reuters, 6/9/00. UNITED KINGDOM London – The General Medical Council found Dr. Abdul Ahmen, 63, guilty of misconduct for offering to circumcise an 8-year-old girl. A reporter with a hidden video camera negotiated for the circumcision and later broadcast the videotape. Dr. Ahmen insisted he had mistakenly said girls and daughters when he meant circumcising boys and sons. The Independent, 12/20/00. London – A sudden rise in FGM in Britain led to a review of current legislation. A parliamentary group recommends tightening the law and closing a loophole that allows girls to be sent abroad to be cut. The Observer, 9/24/00. UNITED STATES Washington, DC – A pilot program, proposing to train 20 women to teach another business to women in Guinea who earn their living from FGM, won a World Bank grant of $150,000. Reuters, 2/9/00. Chicago, IL – Doctors and parents should not assign a gen- der to newborns with ambiguous genitals until malforma- tions can be reviewed by specialists, according to the AAP Committee on Genetics. Pediatrics, 7/00. Rockville, MD – FDA notification, “Potential for Injury from Circumcision Clamps,” warns about complications with Gomco and Gomco-type clamps and Mogen and Mogen-type clamps. More than 100 injuries, reported from 7/96 to 1/00, include laceration, hemorrhage, penile ampu- tation, and urethral damage. Dept. of Health and Human Services, 8/28/00. Birmingham, MI – “Inadvertent obstruction of airway during breast feeding” is cited as cause of death, but the “acci- dental death” occurred 8 days after birth and just hours after his circumcision. State of Michigan, Certificate of Death, 7/28/00. North American Task Force on Intersex, was formed by pediatric urologist, Ian Aaronson, MD, Medical University of South Carolina, in response to the growing debate over standards of practice for medical treatment of intersex children. Tel: 843-792-4531. NATFI Press Release, 2/23/00.
ANNOUNCEMENTS

Call for Abstracts: Seventh International Symposium on Genital Integrity, 4-7 April 2002, Georgetown University Conference Center. Send abstracts to NOCIRC, POB 2512, San Anselmo, CA 94979-2512.

Stop Infant Circumcision Society demonstration at the US Capitol, April 1-7, 2002, Genital Integrity Awareness Week. More information: sicsociety@sicsociety.org.


BOOKS, BOOKLETS, JOURNALS, NEWSLETTERS, REPRINTS & MORE


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Graphic Arts Network, Inc., POB 432900, South Miami, FL 33243-2900. Suggested donation: $30/thousand cards.


Female Genital Cutting and Coming of Age in Guinea. Qualitative study in English and French. Free. DHS Publications, ORC Macro, 11785 Beltsville Drive, Suite 300, Calverton, MD 20705.


Female Genital Mutilation: Clinical Guidelines, by Leila Chung. Healthrites mail order bookshop, 328-336 Liverpool Rd, Ashfield NSW 2131 Australia. Tel: +02 9716 6099.

FORWARD: FGM Holistic Care for Women: A Practice Guide for Midwives; Friends are Forever; Female Genital Mutilation: A Case Study in Birmingham. FORWARD, 6th Floor, 50 Eastbourne Terrace, London, W2 6LX, England. Tel: +20 7725 2606; www.forward.dirname.co.uk.


Genital Integrity Awareness Week, photographs by James Loewen (www.nocirc.org/news). Ordering information: James3d@home.com.

ISNA News. Intersex Society of North America. $35/year. ISNA, POB 301, Petaluma, CA 94953; info@isna.org.

International Norms and Cultural Change: The Case of Female Genital Cutting, by Elizabeth Heger Boyle, Assistant Professor of Sociology & Law, 909 Social Sciences Tower, Univ. of MN, Minneapolis, MN 55455. boyle@socwci.umn.edu.


VIDEOS

Circumcision? Intact Facts, 18-min. VHS. $44.05. Injoy Productions. Tel: 800-326-2082.

Intact’s Circumcision video. www.intact.ca.

Genital Integrity: A New Awareness. NOCIRC conference and ICGI march to and demonstration at the Capitol video-tapes. tshale@yahoo.com.


Tahara. FGM. 5-minutes. VHS. Sara Rashad, From the Heart Productions. Tel: 310-458-3298.

The 8th Day. VHS. $30 (includes S/H). Keren Marcuze, POB 361425, Los Angeles, CA 90036.

More resources: www.nocirc.org (see pamphlet #2 and past newsletters).

Promotion of Initiatives to Eradicate Female Genital Mutilation. www.gtz.de/fgm.


Sweet Dreams: A pediatrician’s secrets for your child’s good night’s sleep, Paul M. Fleiss, MD, MPH, FAAP, with Frederick M. Hodges, DPhil, autographed copy, US $14.95 plus $3 S/H. NOCIRC, POB 2512, San Anselmo, CA 94979. [Excellent non-circumcising information.]

Your tax-deductible donation will help ensure NOCIRC’s continued success. Thank you.
Seventh International Symposium on Genital Integrity
Georgetown University Conference Center, Washington, DC, April 4-7, 2002
International experts will address medical, legal, and human rights aspects of male and female genital cutting, the right of children to genital integrity, and social activism for cultural change. All presentations in English.

Registration postmarked by January 15: Professionals: $65/half-day, $120/full day, $325/full program; Non-professionals: $50/half-day, $95/full day, $250/full program. Please make checks payable to: NOCIRC, POB 2512, San Anselmo, CA 94979-2512 USA.

After March 15, on-site registration only: $80/half-day, $140/full day, $375/full program.

Registration fee includes wine and cheese reception (Thursday), continental breakfast and buffet lunch (Friday-Sunday), and is exclusive of accommodation and dinner.

For program flier with registration form, send SASE to NOCIRC (will be sent early 2002).

Continuing Education: CE credits will be provided.

GIAW Website: www.themenscenter.org/intact/
Accommodation suggestions: Georgetown University Conference Center’s Marriott reservation desk: 202-687-3235. Mention NOCIRC for special rates.

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