MANAGED PAIN
Will Michigan Hear the Screams of Babies?

by Nancy Mulnix, RN, MA

Michigan is making history! In April, a bill to mandate the use of pain relief for all procedural pain experienced by newborns, infants, children and adolescents was introduced in the Michigan legislature. House Bill 4707, was written by Representative Jack Horton of Lowell, Michigan and co-sponsored by 24 other legislators from both parties (almost one-fourth of the House of Representatives). This is the first legislation in the United States which specifically addresses the horror of untreated pediatric pain.

Circumcision, the most frequently performed surgical procedure in this country, is done routinely to newborns without any pain relief whatsoever. It was the horror of circumcision that led me to crusade for the introduction of this bill. The bill specifically defines circumcision as a surgical procedure because so many physicians dismiss it as inconsequential. HB 4707 forbids physicians to perform surgery on any child who is strapped in the circumcision restraint board and not given anesthesia. HB 4707 mandates that parents be fully informed about the availability and risks of pain management before consenting to the procedure. It states that health care providers must be trained and continuously updated about pediatric pain management.

The language of this bill is actually based on federal guidelines for the care and use of laboratory animals! We do not have the moral luxury to permit physician-inflicted pain to continue during our ongoing battle against circumcision.

Medical science has the medications and techniques to combat procedural pain in even the tiniest infant, but this knowledge has not changed physician practices. Babies and children are suffering! Protecting children and others who cannot speak for themselves is a primary obligation of government – and of each of its citizens. Michigan has recognized the need to legislate compassionate pain management for those whose lives are ending. We must do no less for those whose lives are just beginning.

HB 4707 has been referred to the Health Policy committee chaired by Representative Joe Palamara of Wyandotte. Support this landmark legislation now by writing or calling Rep. Palamara and your own legislator. A public outcry against this unmitigated torture will make this bill law.

Nancy Mulnix, RN, MA, lives in Lowell, Michigan, (616) 897-0204. She says she can’t sleep at night knowing the torture babies are enduring. Her loving dedication led to the introduction of this historic bill.
A hearing on Michigan House Bill 4707, Pediatric Pain Management Legislation, is scheduled by the Health Policy Committee in Lansing for mid-October. Without the support of this committee, the bill will never make it to the House floor to be voted on. Public support now is crucial to passing the bill out of committee!

Contact the committee chair expressing your support for this bill. A personal letter is most effective. At a minimum, please send one letter to the chair of the Health Policy Committee, Rep. Joseph Palamara at the address below. If you find your own representative in the list below, please contact him or her as well.

Using the addresses listed below, address envelopes as:

The Honorable (full name)
State Representative

Begin your letter with:
Dear Representative (last name):

Use your own words. Be polite and brief.

If you prefer to call, the best times to find a legislator in the office in Lansing are Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

Write One or More of these Health Policy Committee Members!

Joseph Palamara, (D) District 24
Chair, Health Policy Committee
2315 20th Street
Wyandotte, MI 48192
(517) 373-0140  fax (517) 373-5970
jpalam@house.state.mi.us

Mark Schauer, (D) District 62
Vice Chair, Health Policy Committee
5695 Glenn Cross Road, L-3
Battle Creek, MI 49015
(517) 373-0555  fax (517) 373-5909
schauer@house.state.mi.us

Beverly Hammerstrom, (R) District 55
Minority Vice Chair, Health Policy
bill co-sponsor
1183 Oakmont Drive
Temperance, MI 48182
(517) 373-0828  fax (517) 373-6970
bhammer@house.state.mi.us

Penny M. Crissman, (R) District 45
210 Charles
Rochester, MI 48307
(517) 373-1773  fax (517) 373-5919
pcrissm@house.state.mi.us

Sharon L. Gire, (D) District 31
Clinton Township, MI
bill co-sponsor
PO Box 30014
Lansing, MI 48909-7514
(517) 373-0159

Michael J. Griffin, (D) District 64
505 N. Elm
Jackson, MI 49202
(517) 373-1795  fax (517) 373-5791

David M. Gubow, (D) District 35
26728 York
Huntington Woods, MI 48070
(517) 373-0478  fax (517) 373-8728

Gerald H. Law, (R) District 20
bill co-sponsor
45209 Woodleigh Way
Plymouth, MI 48170
(517) 373-3816  fax (517) 373-5919
glaw@house.state.mi.us

Burton Leland, (D) District 13
20765 Tireman
Detroit, MI 48228
(517) 373-6990  fax (517) 373-5932

John Llewellyn, (R) District 100
5588 W. 32nd Street
Fremont, MI 49412
(517) 373-7317  fax (517) 373-8872
jllewel@house.state.mi.us

Raymond Murphy, (D) District 7
Speaker Pro Tempore
610 Chicago Boulevard
Detroit, MI 48202
(517) 373-0589  fax (517) 373-5791

Kirk Profit, (D) District 54
205 Valley Drive
Ypsilanti, MI 48197
(517) 373-1771  fax (517) 373-5970
kprofit@house.state.mi.us

Andrew Raczkowski, (R) District 37
bill co-sponsor
28619 Herndonwood Drive
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
(517) 373-1793  fax (517) 373-8501
araczko@house.state.mi.us

Sue Rocca, (R) District 30
bill co-sponsor
39964 Saal Road
Sterling Heights, MI 48313
(517) 373-7768  fax (517) 373-5945

Judith L. Scranton, (R) District 66
2457 Spring Lake Lane
Brighton, MI 48116
(517) 373-1784  fax (517) 373-5919
jscrant@house.state.mi.us

Samuel Thomas, III, (D) District 10
19260 Burlington
Detroit, MI 48203
(517) 373-1782  fax (517) 373-5946
stThomas@house.state.mi.us

Paul Wojno, (D) District 28
27365 Jean Road
Warren, MI 48093
(517) 373-2275  fax (517) 373-7316
pwojno@house.state.mi.us

NOCIRC of Michigan Informants may purchase the award-winning Whose Body, Whose Rights? at $25 post-paid. This video is an excellent educational tool for presentation to classes or groups and for loaning to expectant parents.

The Informant (ISSN 1092-020X) is published three times a year by NOCIRC of Michigan. It represents our commitment to provide educational information in this state and to activists everywhere. Articles, comments, and questions are welcome.

NOCIRC of Michigan Experts In Caring
PO Box 333, Birmingham, MI 48012
Phone: (248) 642-5703
Fax: (248) 642-9528
E-mail: 72202.307@compuserve.com
Norm Cohen, Director
Nora Plank-Champe, Coordinator
Excerpts from Proposed Michigan House Bill 4707, Pediatric Pain Management

"The legislature recognizes . . . that it has been scientifically proven that a human fetus feels pain and that pre-term infants and full-term infants respond to pain and have memory of pain . . . A physician shall not perform a surgical procedure or other painful procedure, including, but not limited to, circumcision, on a patient who is a pre-term infant, full-term infant, child, or adolescent and who is paralyzed by a chemical agent or is physically restrained, unless the patient is anesthetized . . . The physician also shall inform the parent or guardian about the advantages, disadvantages, and risks of each method of pain and symptom management . . . Failure to provide appropriate and adequate control of pain in those patients amounts to substandard and unethical medical practice."

"We support and endorse Michigan House Bill 4707. The people of Michigan are taking a leadership role in protecting infants and children from suffering the pain of surgery without anesthesia. However, infant male circumcision remains a brutal violation of a child's right to bodily integrity, whether anesthesia is used or not. House Bill 4707 is an important first step in acknowledging the rights of infants and children. As children's advocates, we look forward to the day when infants and children are protected from both mutilation and torture."

Betty Katz Sperlich, R.N.
Mary Conant, R.N.
Nurses for the Rights of the Child

"I've done hundreds of circumcisions – and I’m incapable of doing one ever again. Though I often used a local anesthetic, even inserting the needle for this caused the baby unnecessary pain and didn’t always work very well."

Dr. Christiane Northrup, M.D.
Women’s Bodies, Women’s Wisdom

"There is no doubt that circumcisions are painful for the baby. Indeed, circumcision has become a model for the analysis of pain and stress responses in the newborn."


Recent studies have concluded that pain and distress, such as those associated with circumcision, can endure in memory, resulting in disturbances of feeding, sleeping, and the stability of the state of arousal. Preliminary data even suggest that early experiences of pain may produce permanent structural and functional reorganization of developing nociceptive neural pathways, which in turn may affect future experiences of pain.

The assessment and treatment of pain in children are important parts of pediatric practice, and failure to provide adequate control of pain amounts to substandard and unethical medical practice."


"Astra Pharmaceuticals recently paid researchers to test the safety and efficacy of its anesthetic cream ("Emla") during newborn male circumcision. Physicians permitted a control group of infants to have their genitals cut without anesthesia. In the group receiving Emla, the study found that it reduced pain only 31% of the time and did not eliminate circumcision pain. Not surprisingly, the paid researchers concluded that the product should be used. Knowing that babies feel pain as acutely as adults, would this conclusion be acceptable if the patients were adult?"

The research was reported in the April 24, 1997 New England Journal of Medicine by Dr. Gideon Koren and others at the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children."

Health and Human Rights Advocate July, 1997, p. 1
National Organization to Halt the Abuse and Routine Mutilation of Males

"Local analgesia is only effective for a few hours. The only sure way of avoiding the long-term harmful effects of neonatal circumcision is for doctors to abandon this unnecessary, intrusive, mutilating, and painful operation."

Dr. John Warren, M.D.
The Lancet (London) Vol. 345 p. 927, April 8, 1995
NOCIRC of Michigan is a consumer rights advocacy group helping parents understand that circumcision is harmful to their children.

We educate mothers, fathers and health care providers in Michigan about the harm of circumcision and about proper intact care. We protect consumers from false medical claims. We actively promote the benefits of normal genitalia.

We are a non-profit group consisting of health care professionals and dedicated lay people. We are committed to effective education, advocacy and activism on behalf of children to protect them from harm. We are part of a worldwide organization dedicated to ending all forms of male and female genital mutilation.

NOCIRC of Michigan
PO Box 333, Birmingham, MI 48012

Baby Faces Wanted!
Please send us a picture of your intact baby boy with a letter about your decision to keep him intact. We’ll print his darling face in an upcoming issue!

Restoration Support Group
A monthly support group meets once a month in metropolitan Detroit for men seeking moral and technical support in foreskin restoration.

FREE PAMPHLETS
Any health care provider in Michigan can receive these free pamphlets in bulk for distribution to their clients: “Answers to Your Questions About Infant Circumcision” and “Answers to Your Questions About Your Young Son’s Intact Penis”

Tell the Truth About Circumcision
A tax-deductible membership fee of $25 or more makes you a NOCIRC of Michigan Informant. Help us to educate parents!

MISSION STATEMENT

NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN

BAB IDEAS FROM THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

“I do 30 to 40 circumcisions a year, and if I saw any indication that it was torture I wouldn’t do it.”

Dr. Sarina Schrager, M.D.
family practitioner, Berwyn, Illinois


INFORMANT
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NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN

(248) 642-5703