

■ NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN ■

INFORMANT

EDUCATING A NEW GENERATION — FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL CHILDREN

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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 circum-

cision 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 knowl-

edge 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.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

NOCIRC has been at the forefront of exposing the extreme pain of circumcision in the face of outrageous denials. Now that we have been successful at this, the ethical dilemma of whether to support less painful circumcision procedures has been raised. Will this encourage more circumcisions and more profit for the drug industry?

It is not for us to decide if babies should endure this extreme pain in service of our greater goal of eliminating circumcision. The majority of Americans would agree that the manufacture of misery in hospital nurseries should cease. What adults don't realize is that babies are looking more human to them than ever and therefore, soon, the custom of circumcision will look more like the mutilation it is.

On behalf of all the children, thanks! Norm Cohen, Director

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How You Can Support House Bill 4707

Make A Difference in the Lives of Newborns

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
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"Whose Body, Whose Rights?"

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

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Lessons In Pain That Cannot Be Denied

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

“How could a being who has been aggressed in this way, while totally helpless, develop into a relaxed, loving, trusting person?”, Dr. Frederick Leboyer, author of *Birth Without Violence*

“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.”

Dr. Howard Stang, M.D., et al.,
Journal of the American Medical Association, 259 (1988):1510

“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.”

Dr. Neil L. Schechter, M.D. et al.,
New England Journal of Medicine
Vol. 331 No. 8, August 25, 1994

“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

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.

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!

NOCIRC of Michigan

PO Box 333, Birmingham, MI 48012

NOCIRC of Michigan Exhibit Dates

Volunteers are needed to help staff **NOCIRC** information tables at the exhibitions listed below. Come and enjoy sharing our message with others!

Please call (248) 642-5703 to volunteer.

◆ Sunday, November 2nd

Baby's-To-Be Show

Northfield Hilton Hotel,

Troy, MI

11:30 am to 3:30 pm

Restoration Support Group

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

Please call (248) 642-5703 for more information.

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*"

Please call (248) 642-5703 to order.

If Only Our Parents Had Known . . .

by Norm Cohen

- *Babies Have Memory.* Infant memory is only vaguely understood today, but it contributes to their personality throughout life.
- *Children Have Rights.* They are not the property of, nor the sequels to, their parents.
- *Parents Are Trustees.* Parental duty is to see that their children feel safe enough to become who they are.
- *Doctors Are People.* They and their hospitals are in business to make money. But they also make mistakes, love control, resist change and don't like to admit when they are wrong.
- *Tradition Can Be Bad.* Traditions perpetuate both a society's good as well as a society's evil.
- *Human Sexuality is OK.* There is nothing evil or dirty or sick about it.
- *The Penis is OK.* It is not dirty or sick or dangerous. Bad attitudes about the penis got us hooked on circumcision.
- *Every Mammal Has a Foreskin.* It serves a protective and sexual function in the male, as well as in the female, throughout life.
- *Widening Horizons.* Our appreciation for what human rights are continues to embrace more of the total human experience, from birth to death.

BAD 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
Wall Street Journal, May 28th, 1996, p. A21

TELL THE TRUTH ABOUT CIRCUMCISION

Become An Informant

A *tax-deductible* membership fee of \$25 or more makes you a **NOCIRC of Michigan Informant**. Help us to educate parents!

PO Box 333, Birmingham, MI 48012

NAME:

ADDRESS:

CITY:

STATE:

ZIP:

PHONE: