
▪ **NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN** ▪

INFORMANT

PREVENTING INFANT CIRCUMCISION — FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

VOLUME 4 — NUMBER 2 — MARCH 2000

Mis-Informed Consent?

Why Parents Really Choose to Circumcise Their Sons

by Jennifer Gardner

It was about 4:00 in the afternoon in mid-October, 1997. Twenty-four hours before, I'd given birth to my first child: a healthy 7 lb. 11 oz. boy named Nathan. I was relaxing with my new family when a knock came at the door and in walks a medical professional. He's a young-ish man – probably a resident – carrying a clipboard in one hand, and wheeling behind him a cart of medical paraphernalia in the other.

"I'm here to take Nathan down to be circumcised," he announces to me, as he hands me the clipboard.

"But I already told *three* people: I don't want him circumcised!" I objected, huffily.

Each of the other times I'd been asked – by the Ob/Gyn and the nurses I said no.

And each time they smiled and replied, "Good!" This time, it was the last straw.

The medic pressed the issue. "But, his name's up on the board," he whined.

At this, I practically shouted at him, "Well, take it off, then!"

This was my introduction to the world of informed consent for newborn circumcision. I thought you just said yes or no, signed the paper if it was "yes," didn't sign if it was "no," and that was it.

Not long after, I phoned my former childbirth class educator who worked as a midwife at the hospital. She told me that circumcision is assumed for boys, unless noted otherwise.

While pregnant with my 2nd child, I mentioned this incident to my OB. "They probably just didn't want to miss anyone who wanted it." This answer

caught me by surprise. Better that they make sure they don't miss anyone who doesn't want it! Still, it wasn't that the man had simply asked me if I'd like it done; he *told* me that he was there to take my son!

One would think that a hospital would uphold the law that says they must obtain a parent's written consent before performing a circumcision. Unfortunately, that is not always the case.

Medical historian Frederick Hodges has spoken about informed consent during the 20th century:

The process of adopting the concept of informed consent into standard hospital practice, especially for surgeries that had never been considered risky enough to require consent, did not get underway, in most cases, until

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

There are many who try to negotiate the non-negotiable right another human being has to an intact body. They demand and get a sizeable slice from a healthy boy's penis, claiming this amputation is either beneficial or harmless.

NOCIRC gives people a reason to look beyond the blind ignorance that perpetuates circumcision and to learn that men were robbed of a fully functional penis. By promoting foreskin restoration, we are promoting the protective, sensory, and sexual benefits of the foreskin. The indisputable reality of these benefits will finally, in this new century, push circumcision off its ancient pedestal, to fall down among the rubble of blood-letting, foot-binding and animal sacrifice.

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

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the 1970s. This applies to neonatal circumcision as well as many other aspects of medical practice. In almost all cases the movement for informed consent was initiated by patients and their lawyers, rather than doctors and hospitals.

In the particular case of circumcision, hospitals instituted their informed consent procedure, as minimal and unsatisfactory as it is, as a result of various lawsuits, which were reported in the medical press as warnings. Two of these critical lawsuits were brought against hospitals by Orthodox Jews, ironically, who were horrified that their babies had been circumcised in the hospital without their permission, thus destroying any possibility of a proper *Bris Milah* on the 8th day. Even today, there are many doctors who do not bother to inquire. They just assume that all parents would want all babies to be circumcised.

In March, 1999 the American Academy of Pediatrics announced that after having reviewed the last 40 years of studies on the subject, they could find very minimal evidence of medical benefits of infant circumcision, and therefore *cannot recommend it be performed* for all boys. Even so, about 60% of newborn boys in the United States are circumcised at birth.

This being the case, I wondered why parents choose to have their baby boys circumcised. I surveyed 40 expectant, new and veteran parents about what led them to their decision to circumcise or not. Note that some people gave more than one reason.

By far, the most popular reason given in favor of circumcision was:

◆ 47.6% "So he would look like his circumcised father."

Other, *mostly misinformed* reasons given in favor of circumcision include:

◆ 23.8% "To be like other parents/boys." "Everybody does it." "Most men are."

◆ 19.0% "Cleanliness."

◆ 14.3% A relative decided to get circumcised as an adult, or is not but wishes that he was and therefore recommended it be done to the baby.

◆ 14.3% "It will need to be done eventually anyway." Someone they know has a son who "had to be" circumcised. "To get it over with."

◆ 9.5% Fear of infections if not done.

◆ 9.5% Fear that their son could not keep himself clean "down there."

◆ 9.5% Generally ignorant about the subject before they said yes.

◆ 9.5% Family is Jewish and "circumcision is a commandment."

◆ 9.5% "It looks better."

◆ 9.5% Mothers "don't have 'one'" and therefore "let the father decide."

◆ 4.8% To prevent penile cancer.

◆ 4.8% To prevent cervical cancer in future partners.

◆ 4.8% "It's just right for me and my family."

◆ 4.8% A medical professional advised it be performed.

◆ 4.8% "I gave it no thought; just did it."

The most popular reasons to not circumcise were:

◆ 37.5% Wanted a totally "intervention-free" birth, boys are "naturally born that way," and they didn't want to add more stress to birth, especially if their baby was born prematurely.

Other reasons given against circumcision include:

◆ 25.0% It's not necessary. Could not find a good reason to have it done.

◆ 8.3% A boy has a right to his own body and therefore to decide for himself whether he wants to be circumcised.

◆ 8.3% Saw one in nursing school and decided against getting any future sons "done".

◆ 4.2% Family is Jewish but they decided not to have their son circumcised.

◆ 4.2% The procedure is painful.

◆ 4.2% As an adult, the father is unhappy with being circumcised so he decided to not circumcise any future sons.

◆ 4.2% So he would be like his non-circumcised father.

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MISSION STATEMENT

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 fraudulent medical claims. We actively promote the benefits of normal genitalia.

We know the removal of normal, healthy tissue from a child's genitals—in the name of medicine, religion or social custom—results in a loss of sexual function and is a violation of human rights.

We are a non-profit group consisting of consumer activists and health care professionals. 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.

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

Educating a New Generation

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Norm Cohen, Director

A WARNING TO
MOTHERS AND FATHERS

The Crossover

© 1997 by Rosa Naparstek

Each and every day
in the early morning sun,

I would run, run, run to a place I knew
where a red, red flower grew.

Then once along the way
I met with some delay and when I got there,
I could see someone had been there before
me.

The petals were pulled apart,
the leaves all torn and scattered and
the tall green stem thrown far away from
them.

I did not then yet understand who could put
their hand to this, but time would show
quite easily that soon enough it would be
me.

An uncircumcised giraffe stopped by
our information table to offer his sup-
port for our efforts at a recent baby
fair. Pat Miller, Director of NOCIRC of
Toledo, posed with him at our table.

Circumcision Permanently Injures Baby Boys and the Men They Become

Surprised? *Why?* This injury should be self-evident: *part of the penis is cut off!* Circumcision strips away and amputates specialized skin and mucous membrane that, in the adult male, would be a sleeve of flesh 3 inches long and 1-1/2 inches in diameter. In fact, *the card you are now holding approximates the surface area of the adult foreskin.*

This flesh, over one-third of the skin of the penis, performs protective, sensory, and sexual functions for a man that are simply irreplaceable. All of the functions of the foreskin are lost when it is amputated by circumcision.

The **National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC)** educates parents and health care providers about circumcision and the benefits of intact genitals.

Preventing Infant Circumcision - For the Well-Being of All
NOCIRC of Michigan (248) 642-5703 www.nocirc.org



Clip To Save! Give to an Expectant Parent!



Note: Please cut out and copy our new *Foreskin Card* shown above for handing out to people who may be interested. This card is an easy way for you to start a discussion on the subject and to introduce them to NOCIRC. This handy educational tool puts tangible evidence of circumcision's harm into the hands of those who may need to hear it most.

If you wish, you can always contact us for additional cards and/or information pamphlets to hand out to your friends, relatives, clients or patients.

Restore Yourself!

A HANDY KIT FOR
CIRCUMCISED MEN

The *Restore Yourself!* kit is a safe and painless way for a man to restore his foreskin. Men who begin the foreskin restoration process report increased sexual sensitivity within 30 days.

Foreskin restoration gives a man new skin to cover the *glans* of his penis and provides the gliding motion found in a natural penis. It will compensate for some—but not all—of the damage caused by circumcision.

The *Restore Yourself!* kit is available for purchase on-line, confidentially and securely, using your VISA, MasterCard or American Express card.

Skin grows in response to the application of continuous tension. Using the kit is simple and takes only a few minutes a day. It may take three months to see new skin and an optimal restoration might take three to four years.

The *Restore Yourself!* foreskin restoration process uses the popular “T-Tape Technique” and comes complete with all of the materials needed to start restoring today, including an excellent, illustrated instruction guide.

If you or the one you love miss the natural functions of a foreskin, then the *Restore Yourself!* kit can help.

Order on-line today at our secure web site, **www.RestoreYourself.com** or call (248) 642-5703 or send a check or money order for **\$27.95**, payable to: **NOCIRC of Michigan**, PO Box 333, Birmingham, MI 48012.

30-Day Money-Back Guarantee!

As our valued customer, your privacy is always absolutely assured.

If you have any medical condition, symptom or dysfunction affecting or related to your genitals, or if you have any health questions or concerns, first consult a competent and caring doctor.

Profits from the sale of this kit are spent entirely on advertising and promoting foreskin restoration.

Circumcision Robs Men of Sexual Pleasure

The male foreskin is highly specialized tissue, richly supplied with blood vessels and over 10,000 "fine touch" nerve endings. These nerve endings contribute significantly to sexual enjoyment for the intact (un-circumcised) male.

The foreskin preserves the normal sensitivity of the *glans* (the end of the penis) by keeping it covered. The foreskin smoothly glides over the glans with its own natural lubricant, engaging the glans in a partnership of mutual stimulation. The foreskin naturally stimulates the glans while the glans naturally stimulates the foreskin.

During intercourse, the mucous membranes of a man's foreskin move back and forth over the mucous membranes of his partner, reducing friction and providing smoother sexual stimulation for both.

Nature's design is beautiful, efficient and rewarding!

Circumcision destroys all the pleasure generated by the foreskin.

Mis-Informed, continued from page 2

Circumcision in this country is seen mainly as "a simple medical procedure," but it is evident from these results that circumcision is performed overwhelmingly for social reasons. There are some people I know who would even go so far as to say that even religious circumcision is mainly a social event.

Expectant parents should ask themselves, "What would the boy choose, if able to give his informed consent?"

Jennifer Gardner is from Ann Arbor and the mother of two intact children, a boy and a girl. Visit her circumcision information web site at: <http://circquotes.tilted.com>. For the complete version of this article with references see: <http://circquotes.tilted.com/informanthtml.html>



Clip To Save! Give to an Expectant Parent!



CALENDAR

Exhibit Dates

Volunteers are needed to help staff the **NOCIRC** information booths at the exhibitions listed below. Please call (248) 642-5703 to volunteer.

◆ **Family Matters 2000**

Parenting Conference

Saturday, March 4th, 2000

8:00 am to 5:00 pm

Oakland Community College, Bldg. H

Auburn Hills Campus

Auburn Hills, MI

◆ **The Greatest Show on Birth**

Friday, May 12th, 2000

4:00 pm - 9:00 pm

Saturday, May 13th, 2000

10:00 am - 6:00 pm

Southfield Civic Center Pavilion

Southfield, MI

WEB WATCH DOCTORS OPPOSING CIRCUMCISION

The non-profit medical organization **Doctors Opposing Circumcision (D.O.C.)** has a web site at <http://faculty.washington.edu/gcd/DOC/> that contains essential curriculum for anyone in the health care field on the anatomy and function of the foreskin. The site provides information on the complications from circumcision, on the care of the intact penis, and several journal articles.

D.O.C. has members in all 50 states, Canada, and throughout the world. As part of a doctor's principle to "*First, Do No Harm,*" they believe that doctors should have no role in this painful, unnecessary and unethical procedure inflicted on the newborn.

CLASSIFIED AD

Help Wanted

NOCIRC of Michigan is looking for an Office Manager for its Birmingham office, 15 to 20 hours per week, and offers a flexible schedule. This paid position requires the following:

- ◆ word processing experience
- ◆ excellent writing skills
- ◆ good public relations skills
- ◆ ability to work independently
- ◆ a desire to change the world
- ◆ *chutzpah!*

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

BAD IDEAS FROM THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Real Quotes from Real Doctors

"It is generally accepted that irritation derived from a tight foreskin may be followed by nervous phenomena, among these being convulsions and epilepsy. It is therefore not at all improbable that in many infants who die in convulsions the real cause of death is a long or tight foreskin."

Dr. Abraham L. Wolbarst, M.D.

"Universal Circumcision"

Journal of the American Medical Association

1914; 62:92-97

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: