
■ **NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN** ■

INFORMANT

PREVENTING INFANT CIRCUMCISION — FOR THE WELL-BEING OF ALL

VOLUME 5 — NUMBER 2 — MAY 2001

Michigan Bill Would Save Babies From the Waste, Fraud, and Abuse of Non-Therapeutic Circumcisions

Michigan House Bill 4006 would save thousands of newborn baby boys each year from the waste, fraud, and abuse of non-therapeutic infant circumcisions by eliminating Medicaid payments for this needless surgery. For these boys, this means a much less traumatic entry into the world, free from the risks of unnecessary surgery and the inevitable pain that results. For the State of Michigan, it means more money for real medical care for those who need it.

Michigan's Medicaid system should not continue paying for this non-therapeutic surgery when so many children lack access to basic medical care. Certainly, the Medicaid money spent on non-therapeutic circumcisions could be far better utilized for more compelling, medically-justified, and cost-effective Medicaid coverage for Michigan's children.

This legislation will enable Medicaid to provide over \$375,000 more per year in better medical care for Michigan's children. This savings estimate does not include circumcisions that are included in fixed-fee Medicaid reimbursement for birth services. It also does not include the cost of anesthesia, related hospital charges, medical supplies, and any costs associated with complications from this needless surgery, including any additional hospital stay.

The medical facts are clearly on our side. No medical association in the world recommends routine infant circumcision. The *American Academy of Pediatrics* and the *American Medical Association* have both stated that this surgery is not medically necessary. As a result, circumcision rates have dropped to 57% in the US, while the worldwide rate is less than 20%.

California, Mississippi, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, and North Dakota have already dropped Medicaid coverage because it is not medically-justified. It would simply be fiscally irresponsible for the State of Michigan to continue this coverage when it already faces over \$500 million dollars in budget deficits for fiscal year 2001.

Parents on Medicaid would not be deprived of a beneficial choice. Any baby boy will be off to a better start in life with the normal, healthy, and functioning genital tissue he was born with. Any benefit to the child that some still speculate this surgery may provide can be easily and routinely achieved by much less drastic measures that are readily available if they are needed.

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DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Many taxpayers have been shocked to learn that government Medicaid programs fund more than 25% of all non-therapeutic circumcisions performed in the United States, with direct costs of over \$35 million per year. Meanwhile, children's legitimate health care needs go unmet and they are deprived of access to local providers because Michigan continues to provide inadequate Medicaid reimbursement to doctors.

Your tax dollars spent on Medicaid gives you the opportunity to demand rational decisions about health care and to end waste, fraud, and abuse in our state. Michigan's children deserve better health care. You can give them a healthy start to life by demanding an end to Michigan's Medicaid funding for needless circumcisions.

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

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ACTION ALERT

Write to Support Michigan's Babies

Michigan House Bill 4006 to eliminate taxpayer-funded Medicaid payments for medically unnecessary circumcisions is currently before the House Appropriations Committee.

Please write all of the state representatives on the committee to voice your support for House Bill 4006 and to protect Michigan's neediest children from the waste, fraud, and abuse of non-therapeutic circumcisions. Public support *now* is crucial to passing this bill out of committee!

At a minimum, *please send a letter to the Chair of the Appropriations Committee, Representative Marc Shulman*, at the address below. Send copies of your letter to the bill's sponsor, Representative Judith Scranton, at the address below. If you find your own representative in the list below, then it is very important that you write to him or her as well.

Begin your letters with, "Dear Representative (last name):". Address your envelopes as:
The Honorable (full name), **Michigan House of Representatives, PO Box 30014, Lansing, MI 48909-7514**

Committee Chair:

Marc Shulman, **West Bloomfield**, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
mshulman@house.state.mi.us, (888) 496-4968, fax (517) 373-8361

Committee Members:

Rich Brown, **Bessemer**, richbrown@house.state.mi.us, (517) 373-0850
Patricia Godchaux, **Birmingham**, pgodcha@house.state.mi.us, (888) 463-2428
Hansen Clarke, **Detroit**, hclarke@house.state.mi.us, (517) 373-0589
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John G. Pappageorge, **Troy**, jpappageorge@house.state.mi.us, (517) 373-1783

MISSION STATEMENT

NOCIRC OF MICHIGAN

NOCIRC of Michigan is a non-profit, consumer rights advocacy group helping parents understand that circumcision is harmful to their children.

We educate parents and health care providers in Michigan about the harm of circumcision and about the proper care of intact genitals. We protect consumers from fraudulent medical claims. We actively promote the benefits of normal genitalia and foreskin restoration.

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 group of dedicated 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 movement to end 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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An Open Letter to Expectant Mothers

by Edna Silva

Dear Expectant Mother,

Do you like making a mistake?

No. Of course not. And neither do I.

That is why I am writing you this letter today. Not to sell you anything, but to offer you some friendly, experienced advice. Mother-to-mother. To let you in on a secret I wish I had known.

You see, I made a big mistake the day my son was born.

My doctor told me that Joshua wouldn't feel any pain during his circumcision. He received an injection for the pain as well as a topical anesthetic. But the doctor still had to strap Joshua down to a plastic board so he couldn't move. As soon as the circumcision started, he screamed and then pooped all over himself. He kept crying hard during the surgery and afterwards.

The nurses told me, "He's just crying because he's strapped down and because he's cold." Well, a mother can always tell when her child is crying out of pain and when her child is crying because he is uncomfortable. I watched Joshua's face and heard his cries while he was circumcised. I will never forget the look on his face. He wasn't just crying because he was strapped down or cold!

How could I believe that Joshua wouldn't be in pain? Well, I thought the anesthetic would work. The doctor said he gave it correctly, but Joshua still screamed. How could it not hurt to have skin stripped off your genitals?

Later, I did some research and learned that anesthesia used for circumcision isn't always effective because it doesn't penetrate the many nerves in the penis. A baby will still be in a great deal of pain.

Circumcision was a vague mystery to me. I had no religious reason to do the procedure, so why exactly did I agree to it? I thought everyone had it done.

The reasons given for circumcision have always been kind of vague. I was told that it was somehow cleaner and that it prevented infections. But why then are more than 80%

of the world's men not circumcised? And why has the circumcision rate in the United States fallen to 57% of newborn boys?

What exactly did I have removed? And what exactly happened to my baby as a result?

I know I can't change the past, but I can change the future. Hopefully, I can help other mothers like you who will be faced with this decision, the only surgery performed on children without a diagnosis.

After my son spent nine months of mysteriously complex and elegant work at literally becoming a whole person in my womb, it was I, his mother, who agreed to let some doctor suddenly make him less than whole.

My doctor had no time to tell me about the pain, the risks or the disadvantages of circumcision. He didn't bother to tell me that both the *American Academy of Pediatrics* and the *American Medical Association* decline to recommend routine circumcision. Nevertheless, he cut away normal, healthy flesh that was part of my son's penis. Suddenly, what nature intended as a covered organ would be uncovered for the rest of his life. What would happen to your most sensitive and moist parts of your body, which are normally covered, if their protective covering was permanently taken away?

Most parents choose neither to view nor to question the details of their son's circumcision. But I did. After seeing Joshua's circumcision firsthand, I can swear to you as a mother that I will never choose to do it again. There is no need to put any child through such a trauma! Had the hospital shown me what they were really going to do, I never would have let them take a knife to my baby.

I urge you to view a circumcision before agreeing to have it done to your boy!

I have thought long and hard about what I agreed to. How could I have done that to my baby? I simply didn't have the up-to-date information I needed when I needed it, like the latest information from the *National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers (NOCIRC)*.

I've learned a lot from **NOCIRC**. I had no idea that the head of the penis is normally a mucous membrane that is permanently desensitized by the removal of its protective sheath of skin called the *foreskin*. What remains is a scarred surface.

What exactly is the foreskin? Well, it's not just any piece of skin. It is complex and sensitive tissue. All mammals have one. The foreskin protects your son's urinary tract from irritation and contaminants. It contains thousands of highly sensitive nerve endings, in more abundance than in any other part of the penis.

Why do we think that our babies won't suffer from circumcision? Why do we take such an unnecessary risk with their penis, their feelings, and their future and put them through such a trauma so soon after they are born? Looking back, my own ignorance as a mother astounds me! What was I thinking?

Surely a person with the power to speak would refuse to be strapped down and submit to an unnecessary operation with its obvious risk of physical damage.

So why do circumcisions continue? Because no baby says, "Stop! Don't do this to me!" and because very few circumcised fathers ever know what it's like to have a foreskin.

Finally, circumcisions continue because mothers are still letting them happen to their baby boys, just like I did. I can tell you now: *that was my big mistake!*

We are the guardians of our children and the guardians of their future. I just wish I had remembered that when I was holding my little Joshua in my arms and was approached by a busy nurse who announced, "It's time for his circumcision."

I wish I would've come to my senses right then. I wish I would've said: *No. It's not!*

Won't you take a few minutes and learn the truth about circumcision, for your new baby boy and for yourself? Then I'm sure you won't make the same mistake I did.

Best wishes,

Edna Silva

House Bill 4006, continued from page 1

Since social, cultural, religious, and ethnic traditions are the primary factors that parents cite when making the decision to circumcise, it is reasonable to object to the State of Michigan paying for their decision.

The *American Academy of Pediatrics* left the decision to circumcise up to parents, based on "what is in the best interest of the child". But how can parents actually evaluate the latest published medical research and come to a rational yes-or-no decision for their child when the AAP's own committee members were unable to make a yes-or-no recommendation for children in general?

To parents, a doctor's offer to circumcise their child and the state's funding for it imply an endorsement of routine circumcision by the medical establishment when no such endorsement exists. Why would an uninformed parent decline to accept something offered by a physician for "free"?

Our surveys of doctors in Michigan show that they often do not obtain the informed consent of parents, relying instead on how parents want their baby boy's penis to look. As long as parents continue to make the decision to circumcise based on the appearance of their son's penis, any requests for Medicaid coverage of this procedure should be denied.

The lack of compelling medical evidence in favor of circumcision is demonstrated by the 43% of American parents who do not choose to have their baby boys circumcised today even though most of these parents have insurance to cover it.

Although only about half of all physicians use adequate anesthesia, its gradual acceptance will increase the cost of circumcisions.

The total number of boys born under Michigan's Medicaid program in 1999 was about 13,000. Statewide, normal and healthy tissue was needlessly removed from the genitals of an estimated 80% of these boys. However, the general trend away from routine circumcision continues.

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.

- ◆ **Michigan Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies Conference**
June 7th - 8th, 2001
7:30 am - 6:00 pm
Bavarian Inn Conference Center
Frankenmuth, MI
- ◆ **Ann Arbor Art Fair**
Wednesday, July 18th through Friday, July 20th, 2001, 10:00 am - 9:00 pm
Saturday, July 21st, 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Liberty Street
Ann Arbor, MI

Restore Yourself!

A HANDY KIT FOR CIRCUMCISED MEN

The *Restore Yourself!* kit is a safe and painless way for a circumcised man to enjoy some of the benefits of having a foreskin.

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. Men who begin the foreskin restoration process report increased sexual sensitivity within 30 days.

The *Restore Yourself!* kit is available for purchase on-line, confidentially and securely, using your credit card. If you or the one you love miss the natural functions of a foreskin, then the *Restore Yourself!* kit will help.

Skin grows naturally 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 3 to 4 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.

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! And, 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, first consult a competent and caring doctor.

BAD IDEAS FROM THE HISTORY OF MEDICINE

Real Quotes from Real Doctors

"Circumcision is the removal of a part of the foreskin of a male. Sometimes the hood of the clitoris of the female needs to be cut or drawn back. Sometimes the foreskin or the hood of the clitoris is so tight as to cause irritation and keep the passions excited and perhaps they are a cause of masturbation. When such is the case, these operations should be performed. Parents should carefully look after these conditions as they, instead of a depraved mind, are the causes of many immoral practices."

Dr. T.J. Ritter, M.D.
The People's Home Medical Book, 1910
(Dr. Ritter was an assistant to the Chair of the Theory and Practice of Medicine at Michigan State University)

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

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