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Like AIDS? Then You Will Love The Anti-Circumcision Movement In San Francisco

By Hank Campbell | March 7th 2011 06:12 PM | 18 comments |  Print |  E-mail | [Track Comments](#)



Hank Campbell

Want to cloud a health and privacy issue? Label it "male genital mutilation" and [wage an expensive marketing campaign to get it outlawed](#).

If you have no taste for irony, do not consider the fact that San Francisco, which practically has "women have the right to choose" in the city charter, would look odd telling women that the right to choose only applies to making babies dead and not giving them a circumcision.

There is no dearth of anti-science fundamentalism in the political fringes - human embryonic stem cell research and global warming on one side and anti-vaccine and anti-GMO people on

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the other side. But this is something special because it is not only anti-science, it is simultaneously big government and anti-Separation of Church and State. That is a quackery trifecta! Ignoring the health benefits of circumcision, a 60% reduction in HIV transmission and every other sexually transmitted disease, [is downright crazy in a city that was as hit by HIV and AIDS as anywhere](#). Circumcision is practically a surgical HIV vaccine, notes Beryl Benderly.

But I wouldn't tell people they *have* to do it because I am not, you know, a militant kook in Frisco.

This may be the kind of issue that both sides of the American political spectrum can agree on when it comes to rights and choice. [As Alex Berezwow of RealClearScience](#) puts it:

Bipartisan concern over Americans' right to privacy should make it obvious that the government has no place in regulating a small flap of skin on baby boys. If the circumcision ban initiative makes it to the ballot in San Francisco, voters would be well-advised to reject the proposal.

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COMMENTS

A very sensible article. There is now evidence that a growing proportion of opponents of male circumcision are starting to realize that they are losing the health and medical debate so strong is the research in favour (www.circinfo.net), so much so that all that is left for them is to carry out ad hominem attacks on the 'silent majority' of knowledgeable individuals, as well as engaging in crazy stunts like this attempt to get a ban on infant male circumcision on the ballot in San Francisco.

In the past they have set up websites replete with erroneous information about circumcision, and that promote

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foreskin mythology, and 'restoration'. As well this vocal minority orchestrate the bombardment of publishers and online news reports when ever the truth appears, and use these as platforms to promulgate their fiction in the hope of perpetrating their fallacies.

But recently they have begun a campaign involving outrageous personal attacks on respected academics, clinicians and others worldwide (including Oprah Winfrey, Bill Gates, Bill Clinton, and the like) who have publicly supported male circumcision based on the considerable evidence now available.

Indeed, any intelligent analysis of the medical literature reveals male circumcision, especially when performed in infancy, provides a lifetime of benefits to public health and individual well-being, is very safe, and has no long-term adverse consequences (www.circinfo.net).

The attacks are libelous and, as a consequence, the perpetrators have taken great care to hide their own identity. Everyone should be be very wary of the anti-circumcision movement. For an expose go to:

http://circinfo.net/anti_circumcision_lobby_groups.html

Brian Morris, PhD DSc
Professor of Molecular Medical Sciences
The University of Sydney

Reply to This » Link

Professor Brian J. Morris (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 01:12 AM

A sadly misinformed/underinformed article. Anyone who would label a foreskin (about 15 square inches in the adult) as a "small flap" should not be quoted anywhere.

To say this ban is related to AIDS is almost silly. Most of the US men who have died of AIDS were circumcised at birth. In 2009 Wawer/Gray quietly reported from Rakai Uganda that the men they circumcised while trying to prove the value of circumcision were in fact 50% MORE likely to infect their partners with deadly HIV than the men they left intact were. In 2010 Bailey followed up with the men of Kisumu Kenya and reported the circumcised men there were no less likely to have HIV after all.

NOT ONE national medical association of doctors on earth (not even Israel's) endorses routine circumcision. As such it is cosmetic surgery. This ban is simply about the basic human right of male, female, and intersex children to be free of cosmetic genital amputative surgery before they can weigh in about their own preference.

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Holland's very up-to-date 2010 policy says of circumcision: "KNMG is calling upon doctors to actively and insistently inform parents who are considering the procedure of the absence of medical benefits and the danger of complications." They also say there is actually a good case to make it illegal.

It's simple. HIS body, HIS decision.

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Ron Low (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 01:37 AM



It's simple. HIS body, HIS decision.

Sorry, but that's just dumb. You don't argue that a child has the right to smoke cigarettes or consume alcohol simply because it's "his" body. Like it or not, children do NOT have the right to make such decisions and arbitrarily extending such rights is a specious argument. The parents are responsible for making the decisions that they think are in the best interest of the child. If they make the decision for circumcision, then it certainly isn't yours or the governments right to decide otherwise.

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Gerhard Adam | 03/08/11 | 02:22 AM

I am intrigued that there is this ultra-conservative movement in San Francisco, of all places.

Where have they been hiding all these years? Certainly it's *his choice* would apply to being aborted yet we don't see any movements to get banning that on the November ballot.

I don't have a choice about smoking a cigar in a restaurant even if all the employees, ownership and other patrons agree. Frisco cares about choice less than practically any city in America so I am happy to see people stepping up.

Other commentary contending some of the people who got AIDS had circumcisions and therefore



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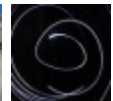
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circumcisions are irrelevant makes no sense. Why not let your kids play with asbestos, since some people who get mesothelioma never touched the stuff?

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Hank Campbell | 03/08/11 | 10:34 AM

"Most of the US men who have died of AIDS were circumcised at birth. In 2009 Wawer/Gray quietly reported from Rakai Uganda that the men they circumcised while trying to prove the value of circumcision were in fact 50% MORE likely to infect their partners with deadly HIV than the men they left intact were" -- that's very misleading, Ron. What they actually found was that there was no statistically significant difference between the two groups.

"In 2010 Bailey followed up with the men of Kisumu Kenya and reported the circumcised men there were no less likely to have HIV after all." -- Wrong, he found a 64% risk reduction. See:
http://www.hivandhepatitis.com/2010_conference/AIDS2010/docs/0802e_2010....

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Jakew (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 06:23 AM

"Professor" Morris wrote:

http://circinfo.net/anti_circumcision_lobby_groups.html

I DO strongly urge everyone to read the spooky stuff this man has written. He actually thinks there is such a thing as a foreskin fetish. Something that is NOT a normal and natural part of sex can be a fetish. Foreskin, and the desire to enjoy a whole normal body is just every mammal's birthright.

He also seems to have a problem with gay people, claiming that the movement to non-surgically restore the foreskin is 80% gay, and that this somehow makes it suspect. He has no way to know this statistic. I can tell him, having randomly surveyed 1000s of English-speaking foreskin restorers online in 2010 that they self-report as gay or bisexual 33% of the time and as straight 2/3 of the time. There may be some sampling bias, as gay or straight men may be more or less willing to discuss their penises online. But I'm not suprised the gay population would be more likely to embrace restoration. I imagine they are simply more in tune to the penis in all its variations and are therefore more likely to learn that something can be done to undo some of the harm of genital mutilation. But they shouldn't have to.

94% of the world's females are protected from even a pin-poke to draw one ceremonial drop of blood, with no religious exemption, even though research shows FGM victims are less likely to contract HIV. This SF Ban is simply about equal protection under the law.

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Ron Low (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 02:04 AM

This SF Ban is simply about equal protection under the law.



It's nothing of the sort and your statement is disingenuous if not an outright lie. Since the individual involved (i.e. a baby) cannot express their opinion, your "ban" is simply depriving the right of parents to make decisions regarding the well-being of their offspring. It is fundamentally no different than legislating many decisions that a parent must make regarding their children.

If you truly believed in "equal protection", then logic would dictate that you would have to oppose abortion, since that is clearly a position whereby an adult is making a decision that will affect the future existence of another sentient organism. The mere fact that the fetus depends on the mother for nourishment or growth doesn't grant license to deprive it of rights.

In any case, I'm not prepared to extend rights to a fetus over those of a rational adult, so I'm equally not prepared to deny rights to parents simply because a baby is too young to make an informed decision on its own behalf.

Your argument about "equal protection under the law" is a sham, since you would be extending a right to an individual incapable of exercising it.

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Gerhard Adam | 03/08/11 | 02:18 AM

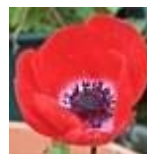
Neonatal circumcision is cosmetic surgery has no therapeutic purpose. In other words, the infant is not suffering from any medical condition that needs cure. It is the same as tattooing or branding an infant. Therefore it is not covered by statute or precedent and would probably be folded under the current FGM

Bill as this winds through the courts. In fact the Oregon decision effectively gave a 9 year old (12 at decision) the right not to be forced to undergo the ritual mutilation at the request of his father. This is the only industrialized nation that clings to this odd tradition with the older victims of it actively defending it. It seems this form of child abuse continues a cycle of violence endemic only to the US. Modern, industrial countries like Canada, Australia, UK and others have abandoned this procedure after the realization it was a waste of medical funds.

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Bud Yanker (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 15:10 PM

St. Paul wrote his letter to the Galatians primarily in order to counter those who were upsetting them by telling them that they must be circumcised or they wouldn't be complete Christians.



He remarked of the 'circumcision party', "why don't they go the full way and castrate themselves?"

Here, we are dealing with medical rather than spiritual matters, and against rather than for circumcision, but I think the same feeling of frustration is appropriate.

—
Robert H. Olley
Quondam Physics Department
University of Reading
England

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Robert H Olley | 03/08/11 | 07:13 AM

This is the most unscientific thing I have yet read on cutting off parts of a baby boys penis. First, do no harm and that means consider the many many health benefits of NOT cutting off functional parts of a baby boy. What a flawed position you are starting at -- ablate the most sensitive parts of the male genitals of a baby. You are promoting a surgery that takes away the main male pleasure zones with some 20000 fine touch and stretch nerve endings. And then you ignore the harm including ED (and the need for viagra) sexual dysfunction (higher PE at young age problem to orgasm at old age) and reduced joy of sex. Lets stop listening to amputees that go on about how glorious their cut member is. People know the harm and must act to stop this. It is not an option to mutilate a baby. Taking away male pleasure zones without consent is ABUSE.

Why can't anyone detect the HIV 60% thing in any populations? Many have pointed to the high circ rate and high HIV rate in the US compared to the low circ rate and LOW HIV rate in EU and JP. However, few mention that within the US, there is no HIV (nor HPV, STD) advantage to missing parts of the penis. What has gotten my attention is that in many of the countries that have started a circumcision campaign, the % of cut men with HIV is much higher than natural penis men with HIV. In Swaziland the infection rate for circumcised males is at 22 per cent while for those with a natural penis it is 20 per cent. IN Kenya they just did a study of a group and circumcision status was not associated with HIV or HSV-2 seroprevalence or current genital ulceration. The US sponsored DHS Comparative Reports No. 22 showed that in Africa there appears no clear pattern of association between male circumcision and HIV prevalence. In 8 of 18 countries with data, HIV prevalence is lower among circumcised men, while in the remaining 10 countries HIV prevalence is higher among circumcised men.

Stop with the bogus amputaion cure for HIV. It does not work. Stop amputating penis parts from babies. It is barbaric and pointless.

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Jack (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 10:10 AM

Science 2.0? More like pseudoscience .05. It's clear the author did not do the minimum research required for an objective article. 1) Results from the African trials have pointed out that any benefits incurred are for those practicing heterosexual relations, not homosexual. 2) He does not address the fact that the U.S. has both the highest rate of circumcision AND the highest rate of AIDS of any English-speaking country. 3) This is the only surgical operation whose popularity is based on the "moral" convictions of popularizers at the end of the 19th century - Harvey Kellogg, for example.

The weakest argument is that children should look like their peers and fatheres in the peen department. All that needs to be said to others in a lockerroom is that their father chose not to mutilate them, and by the father that medical knowledge has increased since he was born and that circumcision was found to have little - if any - benefit.

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Anonymous (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 13:01 PM

Science 2.0? More like pseudoscience .05.



If you want to criticize people on a science site, at least use terms you understand - what you are contending by your comment is that the studies were *junk* science, not pseudoscience. No one is claiming a foreskin is a perpetual motion machine. See? You got a little smarter.

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Hank Campbell | 03/08/11 | 13:10 PM

I find it funny how the phobes insist that AIDS is god's punishment for being gay and they ignore that us lesbians are the lowest risk group for getting or transmitting AIDs.

in their logic, god loves lesbians best.

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nina (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 15:33 PM

To the comment from Professor Brian Morris.

Morris is a known circumfetishist.[12] A circumfetishist is someone who derives sexual pleasure from the act of circumcision.[10] You would assume this is a rare phenomenon that couldn't possibly exist in the medical or "scientific" (if you can call these people scientists) community. It's actually rather easy to demonstrate the problem. Let's take Brian Morris for example. His website links to at least 8 circumfetish websites (Circlist, Erotic Male Circumcision, Circumcised Kids, Circumcision Fetish, Cutting Club, Gilgal Society, etc), and 7 websites that sell devices to perform circumcisions.[5] He's also a member of the Gilgal Society,[11] a group that publishes circumcision porn, including circumcision fan-fiction stories of children being given wine and asked to masturbate whilst being circumcised.[6-7] Even more disturbing is the fact that so many researchers of the current "circumcision to prevent HIV" hypothesis are members and associates of this sick group, including Auvert, Bailey, Halperin, Morris, Schoen, Wiswell, Weiss, Willcourt, Stand, Short, Kunin, Harvey, Gelbaum, Cox, Cormier, Bailis, Castellsague, etc.[8]

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12. Google Search (2011). <http://tinyurl.com/morriscircumfetish>

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thedirt (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 15:49 PM

"But I wouldn't tell people they have to do it because I am not, you know, a militant kook in Frisco."

If you knew that by some strange magic you were about to be transformed into an infant and you could choose right now (as an adult) whether or not you would be circumcised or not after you were transformed into an infant, would you say yes or no? (Also, you will have no idea of the circumstances, such as who does it, or what method is used, or how much skin and what type is removed (such as: whether all the mucosal skin is removed or only part, or whether or not any of the frenulum is left intact), or whether or not any pain relief will be administered.)

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kf (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 16:20 PM

Wow. Talk about "muddying the waters." Nobody is banning circumcision for those that WANT it. That's the whole point of having "the right to choose."

It never ceases to amaze me how people have to whip out the abortion debate whenever we talk about circumcision and choice. For the record, I myself am against abortion, but the abortion debate doesn't really matter; it is a red herring. Whether you're "pro-life" or "pro-choice," neither side can consistently argue in favor of

circumcision. It is hypocritical to be arguing for a child's "right to life," but not for a child's right to his body. What, you can't chop up a child in its mother's womb, but you can chop him up as soon as he comes out? And it's "my body, my choice," for women only?

Here is another non-argument; "circumcision is a vaccine." Really? What exactly does circumcision prevent? Nothing. There is NOTHING that circumcision "prevents." Any disease that you name can be contracted by either circumcised or anatomically correct men. Circumcision can't even BEGIN to work like any kind of vaccine. A vaccine works by strengthening a body's immune system against microbes that cause disease. When a virus enters the body, the body's defenses come into action. When HIV enters the body, how on earth does lacking a foreskin do you any good? And of what difference is it to a newborn who is at absolute zero risk for sexually transmitted disease anyway?

Circumcision FAILS. In fact, it fails so badly that even circumcision "researchers" can't stress condoms and sex education enough. Even if the "research" was correct (and this is actually rather dubious), circumcised men would still be at a 40% risk. I'm sorry, but that is NOT the effectiveness of any kind of "vaccine." What vaccine on the market fails by that much? If the WHO, UNICEF or UNAIDS were pushing a condom that broke 50% of the time, they'd be laughed out of the room!

Circumcision has failed to prevent HIV in quite a few African countries, though circumcision proponents would never tell you about them. According to demographic health studies performed in other countries in Africa, HIV transmission was prevalent in circumcised men in at least 6 different countries:

Cameroon - DHS 2004 - 4.1 vs 1.1 (91% circumcised), Ghana - DHS 2003 - 1.6 vs 1.4 (95.3% circumcised), Lesotho - DHS 2004 - 22.8 vs 15.2 (23% circumcised), Malawi - DHS 2004 - 13.2 vs 9.5 (20% circumcised), Rwanda - DHS 2005 - 3.8 vs 2.1, Swaziland - DHS 2006-2007 - 22 vs 20.

According to Malaysian AIDS Council vice-president Datuk Zaman Khan, more than 70% of the 87,710 HIV/AIDS sufferers in the country are Muslims. In Malaysia, most, if not all Muslim men are circumcised, whereas circumcision is uncommon in the non-Muslim community. 60% of the Malaysian population is Muslim, which means that HIV is spreading in the community where most men are circumcised at an even faster rate, than in the community where most men are intact.

In America, the majority of the male population is circumcised, approximately 80%, while in most countries in Europe, circumcision is uncommon. One would expect for there to be a lower transmission rates in the United States, and for HIV to be rampant in Europe; HIV transmission rates are in fact higher in the United States, where most men are circumcised, than in various countries in Europe, where most men are intact.

I'm sure there is plenty of "science" that says circumcision "prevents AIDS," but there's also plenty of science that says it doesn't. And there's plenty of realities that show the exact opposite. (see above)

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Joseph4GI (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 16:37 PM

Let's not blind ourselves with "science." It cannot possibly be "scientific" to be "studying" ways to preserve old, outdated practices. We would never "study" the effectatiousness of circumcising girls. We would never "study" the usefulness of footbinding. The whole point of progress is to replace the old with the newer and better. Circumcision is at least 2 millenia behind. People have been trying to find some sort of "medical benefit" for it for years. When are "researchers" going to look for ways to phase it out?

"Research" that places primacy in the deliberate destruction of the human body has got to be the most scientifically flawed quackery that can ever exist. Medical research is supposed to be looking for ways to cure and prevent disease while PRESERVING the human body. Surgery and amputation should be turned to as a very last resort. Circumcision "research" places the cart before the bull.

We need to ban further "research" on circumcision, and we need to ban American doctors from further mutilating children in the so-called name of "medicine." We would NEVER allow this for girls, no matter how many "studies" there were. That we are allowing this for boys is sexism pure and simple.

Circumcision is mutilation. It's child abuse, and it's a violation of basic human rights.

It is so for girls, and it is also so for boys.

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Joseph4GI (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 16:38 PM

But here's the bottom line:

Parents most definitely have to make decisions for their children. In fact, this is their very duty. No one is denying this fact. Parents must most certainly make medical decisions for their children. But here is the assumption when it comes to circumcision; that there is actually a medical decision to make.

If a child gets appendicitis, a parent is then faced with the decision to approve that child's operation. If the child needs his/her gall bladder out, then the parent must sign a consent form. Sometimes children have to have heart surgery, and parents are faced with the heavy duty to weigh in the pros and cons.

But with circumcision, there is no such situation.

The foreskin is not a birth defect. Nor is it a congenital deformity or genetic anomaly akin to a cleft or 6th finger. The foreskin is normal, healthy tissue found in all boys at birth.

Circumcision is taking a healthy, non-consenting individual, strapping him down and forcefully cutting off a healthy, normal part of his genitals. It is by very definition, forced genital mutilation.

Unless there is an actual medical condition present, how is it that doctors are even performing surgery in healthy, non-consenting individuals, much less giving parents any kind of an "option?"

Here is a litmus test; everyone keeps trying to use the "studies" in Africa as an alibi to mutilate babies. But how far do people actually care about "health benefits?"

How many "health benefits?" What number of "studies" would ever convince you to give your baby daughter a labiaplasty? (Western doctors perform these on older women now upon request.)

Would you do it if "studies showed" that it "reduced the risk of AIDS by 60%?" Why? Why not?

If a doctor came in and told you "look, I can give your son a vaccine that has been proven to immunize your son against AIDS, or we can circumcise him. Which do you choose?"

Would you choose the vaccine, or would you still have an excuse to circumcise him? Your answer would speak volumes.

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Joseph4GI (not verified) | 03/08/11 | 16:40 PM

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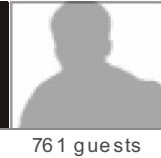


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