Appendix B: Medical Letters

Select correspondences from medical authorities opposing circumcision as a preventive measure
23 June 2011

Mr Dean Ferris  
Co-Director  
National Organisation of Circumcision Information Resource Centres  
South Africa

Dear Mr Ferris

CIRCUMCISION OF BABIES FOR PROPOSED HIV PREVENTION

We refer to the above matter and your email correspondence of 16 February 2011.

The matter was discussed by the members of the Human Rights, Law & Ethics Committee at their previous meeting and they agreed with the content of the letter by NOCIRC SA. The Committee stated that it was unethical and illegal to perform circumcision on infant boys in this instance. In particular, the Committee expressed serious concern that not enough scientifically-based evidence was available to confirm that circumcisions prevented HIV contraction and that the public at large was influenced by incorrect and misrepresented information. The Committee reiterated its view that it did not support circumcision to prevent HIV transmission.

We trust that you will find this in order.

Yours faithfully

Ms Ulundi Behrtei  
Head: Human Rights, Law & Ethics unit  
Obo Chairperson: Human Rights, Law & Ethics Committee  
SA Medical Association
February 16, 1996

Dr. Peter Rappo  
Committee on Practice & Ambulatory Medicine  
American Academy of Pediatrics  
141 Northwest Point Boulevard  
P. O. Box 927  
Elk Grove Village, IL  60009-0927

Dear Dr. Rappo:

As representatives of the American Cancer Society, we would like to discourage the American Academy of Pediatrics from promoting routine circumcision as preventative measure for penile or cervical cancer. The American Cancer Society does not consider routine circumcision to be a valid or effective measure to prevent such cancers.

Research suggesting a pattern in the circumcision status of partners of women with cervical cancer is methodologically flawed, outdated and has not been taken seriously in the medical community for decades.

Likewise, research claiming a relationship between circumcision and penile cancer is inconclusive. Penile cancer is an extremely rare condition, effecting one in 200,000 men in the United States. Penile cancer rates in countries which do not practice circumcision are lower than those found in the United States. Fatalities caused by circumcision accidents may approximate the mortality rate from penile cancer.

Portraying routine circumcision as an effective means of prevention distracts the public from the task of avoiding the behaviors proven to contribute to penile and cervical cancer: especially cigarette smoking and unprotected sexual relations with multiple partners. Perpetuating the mistaken belief that circumcision prevents cancer is inappropriate.

Sincerely,

Hugh Shingleton, M.D.  
National Vice President  
Detection & Treatment  

Clark W. Heath, Jr., M.D.  
Vice President  
Epidemiology & Surveillance Research

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