

Intact America

Children's Rights

<https://www.intactamerica.org/intact-america-blasts-aaps-call-to-weaken-fgm-ban/>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

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The founder and director of Intact America, which has been campaigning to change the way America thinks about male circumcision, today blasted the American Academy of Pediatrics call to legalize a form of female genital cutting, a practice outlawed in this country as a type of genital mutilation linked to oppression of girls and women.

We believe in the human rights of all babies to intact bodies, but have been focused on male circumcision because we believed the horror of female genital mutilation had been outlawed forever in the United States, said Georganne Chapin. For this trade association of doctors to call for allowing a form of female genital cutting at the same time they are pushing to recommend for the first time in favor of neonatal male circumcision is outrageous, unethical and indefensible.

The AAP report which urged changes to allow a ritual nick of girls genitals so families don't send their daughters overseas for a full genital cutting came out the same day that two congressmembers Democrat Joseph Crowley of New York and Republican Mary Bono of California introduced legislation (The Girls Protection Act, H.R. 5137) that would make it illegal to transport a minor girl living in the United States out of the country for the purpose of female genital mutilation.

One can only assume that the congressmembers who crafted the proposed law believed they were building on the well-accepted human rights position that any forced female modification of girls born or living in the United States should be outlawed, said Chapin. Intact America is an organization that envisions a world where children are protected from permanent bodily alteration inflicted on them without their consent, irrespective of cultural, religious or parental preferences.

Medical ethics requires that any procedure as invasive as surgery include both medical necessity and the consent of the patient. Neither can be present in the case of infant circumcision, whether performed on boys or girls. The current federal law that the AAP is seeking to change explicitly rejects custom or ritual as a justification for forced genital alteration of girls.

Intact America believes the same human right that currently extends to girls should be extended to boys. No reputable medical authority currently recommends routine neonatal male circumcision, which the American Medical Association calls non-therapeutic.

Both the AAP and the Centers for Disease Control, however, are currently reconsidering their neutral stance on neonatal male circumcision, relying on African studies of adult men on the role circumcision might play in curbing female to male but not male to female, or male to male transmission of HIV. Intact America argues it is profoundly unethical to extrapolate from flawed studies of consenting adult African men to recommend the medically unnecessary removal of healthy, functional tissue from baby boys in this country on the chance those boys will engage in unsafe sexual behavior decades later.

It appears the pediatricians academy is motivated to weaken its previous unequivocal opposition to female genital mutilation because it cannot get around the blatant double standard it applies in its acceptance of medically unnecessary infant male circumcision as a legitimate surgical tool, said Chapin.

The language with which the AAP paper describes female genital cutting is strikingly similar to that which could be applied to neonatal male circumcision. The paper says female genital alteration is medically unnecessary and violates the principle of nonmaleficence the doctors commitment to do no harm to his or her patient. The paper also calls female genital cutting on a minor girl a practice that violates the rights of infants and children to good health and well-being, part of a universal standard of basic human rights.

This is gender equity run amok, said Chapin. The same human right that applies to a baby girl should apply to a baby boy. Instead of calling for the resumption of a practice that has been rightly described and outlawed as female genital mutilation, the pediatricians should be stopping the analogous practice imposed on baby boys more than a million times every year in this country, at a cost to the health industry of more than a billion dollars.

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