

Inconsistencies on US Departments of Health Websites Regarding Routine Infant Male Circumcision: A Content Analysis

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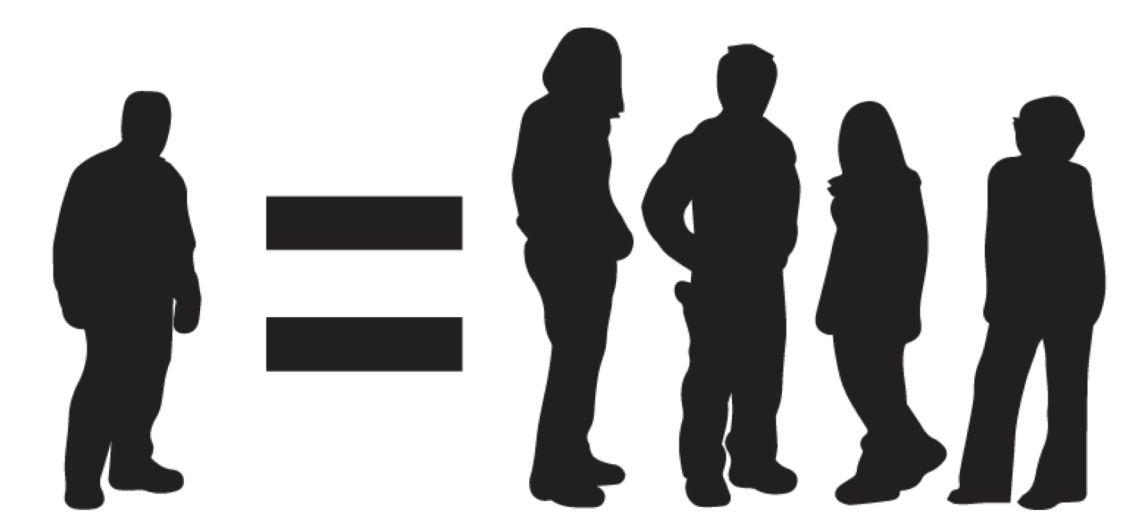
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BACKGROUND

- Public health literature suggests that routine infant male circumcision (RIMC) is effective at preventing urinary infections, penile cancer, and curbs the transmission of some sexually transmitted infections, especially HIV along with HPV and herpes.
- Simultaneously, controversy surrounds RIMC pertaining to children's rights and healthcare ethics.
- Adult male circumcision has been shown to result in a 50% to 65% reduction in HIV acquisition in the circumcised subject.¹
- In addition to HIV prevention, adult male circumcision is reported to decrease incidences of HPV and Herpes infections.²

METHODS

- We reviewed state and local departments (population>500,000) of health (SLDOH) websites in the U.S. (n=50, n=29 respectively) regarding RIMC from 9/18/2017 to 10/17/2017.
- Websites were analyzed for the source of information, messaging and mention of RIMC, and resources and recommendations.
- Search terms on individual websites included "circumcision," and "male circumcision."

REFERENCES

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State Departments of Health (SDOH) That Do Not Mention Routine Infant Male Circumcision (RIMC)

AL, AZ, CO, DE, FL, IA, OH, OK, PA, TN, UT, VT, VA, MD, NC, OH, CO, TX, IN, FL, TN, OK, AZ, AZ, OR, TX, & CA

State Departments of Health (SDOH) That Mention Routine Infant Male Circumcision (RIMC)

AK, AS, CA, CT, GA, HI, ID, IL, IN, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MS, MO, MT, NE, NV, NH, NJ, NM, NY, NC, ND, OR, RI, SC, SD, TX, WA, WV,, WI, WY, MD, IL, TX, MI, TX, TX, CA, TN, WI, NY, PA, CA, CA, & WA.

RESULTS

- There was considerable variation in how RIMC was described, its necessity and recommendations.
- Fifty three (67.1 %) websites mentioned male circumcision, of which only 21 (39.6 %) mentioned messages about procedures or practices.
- Of those that mentioned RIMC practice, 8 (10.1 %) supported it for health benefits, 9 (11.4 %) were neutral, and 4 (5.1 %) discouraged the practice.
- Seventeen websites (21.5 %) provided general information about the surgical procedure, along with precautions and advice to facilitate recovery.
- Furthermore, many websites emphasized the burgeoning demand for RIMC in African nations.

CONCLUSIONS

- In the absence of safety and efficiency data, SLDOH websites are providing inconsistent and often contradictory messages about RIMC.
- Given that there is an increase in Americans use of the Internet to seek health information, these findings illustrate the increased need for digital health literacy.
- In its policy statement, the American Academy of Pediatrics Task Force on Circumcision, they concluded that health benefits of newborn male circumcision outweigh the risks. Benefits cited include prevention of urinary infections, penile cancer, and transmission of some sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.³
- The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists supports the AAP position, adding that there has been a shift from a fairly negative position on newborn circumcision from fairly negative to moderately positive.⁴