

Michigan Capitol protest asks: Is circumcision mutilation?

Updated: Jan. 20, 2019, 6:04 a.m. | Published: Sep. 12, 2014, 5:42 p.m.

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LANSING, MI — A small group of protesters decked in fake blood-stained jumpsuits gathered outside the Michigan Capitol on Friday, acknowledging their shock value as they urged parents to stop circumcising their newborns.

“It represents the mutilation that we, as children, had inflicted upon us,” said Norm Cohen, state director of NO-CIRC. “Somebody cut our penis. There was no disease. There was no risk, and yet somebody decided to cut this.”

The American Academy of Pediatrics, in its 2012 review of existing medical research, concluded that “the health benefits of newborn male circumcision outweigh the risks and that the procedure’s benefits justify access to this procedure for families who choose it.”

Specific benefits, according to the AAP, include prevention of urinary tract infections, penile cancer, and transmission of some sexually transmitted infections, including HIV.

But Cohen said that there is no great data on how many complications occur and suggested that tradition and aesthetics — not necessarily science — motivate parents to approve the procedure. He noted that abstinence or condoms are more effective ways to prevent sexually transmitted diseases.

“This is not a legitimate way to prevent disease,” he said. “It’s really just mutilation. Even those who promote it for health reasons will acknowledge the benefit is very low. This is the only surgery that’s done on children without a diagnosis.”

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