



Grand Rapids

Group protests against circumcision in Grand Rapids: 'It's torture'

Updated Apr 03, 2019; Posted May 16, 2015

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GRAND RAPIDS, MI -- A national anti-circumcision group protested Friday outside Helen DeVos Children's Hospital in Grand Rapids, some members wearing white pants with mock bloodstains.

Reactions from passersby on Michigan Street NE ran the gamut.

At one point, a piece of raw meat with a lewd note was thrown at protesters representing [Bloodstained Men and Their Friends](#), said Brother K, founder of the California-based nonprofit.

At another time in the five-hour protest, a working doctor stopped for a photo and said the demonstration gave him the courage to speak out against circumcision, said Brother K, who added that is his legal name.

Brother K said the 15 protesters, with three young children and their mothers among them, left feeling accomplished. The next stop on their 15-day trip across the country is planned for [Saturday, May 15, at the University of Michigan](#) in Ann Arbor. They're joined in Michigan by the state chapter of [National Organization of Circumcision Information Resource Centers](#).

Protestors held signs outside the children's hospital, some reading: "Don't welcome him to life with a knife!" and "I did not consent!"

Bloodstained Men stands against circumcision because members believe the practice is unnecessary and violates a boy's human rights. Brother K claims circumcision is "destructive" and based off "inaccurate and false medical advice."

"This is torture for a baby, no matter how you look at it," he said. "We have a nation of wounded men walking around."

The American Academy of Pediatrics says the health benefits of newborn male circumcision outweigh the risks of the surgery, but the benefits aren't great enough to recommend that all newborn boys be circumcised. Parents should have the final say, the AAP said in 2012.

Health benefits of circumcision include a decreased risk of urinary tract infections and sexually transmitted diseases, as well as protection against penile cancer, according to WebMD.

Risks of circumcision include pain, bleeding and irritation. Side effects from anesthesia are possible, the Mayo Clinic says.

Bloodstained Men contend circumcision can lead to scarring, infections, inflammation and less sensitivity during sex.

"It's common sense. You don't perform surgery on a healthy human body," Brother K said. "American doctors are not telling parents the truth about baby circumcision, but it's a gruesome, appalling, destructive mutilation of a healthy child's genitals."

Mothers have joined the grassroots movement after regretting their decision to have their babies circumcised, Brother K said. Bloodstained Men refers to them as "regret moms."

"So many moms say, 'If someone had just said a word to me, I wouldn't have done it to my baby,'" he said.

The group began wearing the head-turning "bloodstained" suits -- white clothing with red paint on the crotch to symbolize the trauma from genital cutting -- outside the American Academy of Pediatrics convention in 2012, Brother K said. They've since worn the suits in protests throughout the nation.

Opinions on the outfits range from "disgusting" to "brilliant."

"It's a very powerful symbol," Brother K said. "It's very effective because it shows the wound in public but in a way that is socially acceptable."

The group is accustomed to getting cursed at by people driving by.

"It's a very emotional issue," Brother K said.

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