

“Intactivists” challenge male circumcision

DANIELA BRIGHENTI & MICHELLE LIU | 2:00 AM, OCT 05, 2015

STAFF REPORTERS



Elizabeth Miles

With red paint stains on the front of their pants, a dozen activists gathered on the corner of College and Chapel streets Saturday to oppose male infant circumcision.

The protest was staged by self-described “intactivists,” members of the anti-circumcision group Bloodstained Men, whose members assert that circumcision violates human rights. Saturday marked the Bloodstained Men’s twelfth stop in the New England and Great Northeast Circumcision Crisis Protests. Bloodstained Men board member David Atkinson said that four members of the group protested at each of the 14 stops on the Northeast tour,

with locals joining in at each site. Activists described the protests as a series of "family-friendly demonstrations against forced infant circumcision."

"It's a fight for baby boys' rights and bodily integrity," Norwich, Connecticut oncology nurse Amanda Decker, who attended Saturday's protest, said.

Decker said that in addition to the general lack of medication or anesthesia during the circumcision procedure — which she said could lead to possible pain during the operation — the procedure can also have long-term effects. Individuals who have been circumcised as an infant are four times more likely to use Viagra in their sexual encounters, Decker said.

Decker said that physicians might also have a monetary incentive for continuing the tradition of infant circumcision. Each procedure takes 15 minutes and can cost over \$500, she said. She added that the profits may deter medical professionals from providing parents with the information about not circumcising their children.

"The medical community doesn't want to acknowledge the damage," Atkinson said.

She added that since the medical community has incentive to continue performing the procedure, reducing the number of infant circumcisions relies on educating parents first.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the national rate of newborn circumcision has decreased by 10 percent from 1979 to 2010.

Lebanon, Connecticut resident Sera Giambattista, who attended Saturday's protest, said more parents now choose not to circumcise their children because they have easier access to information about the benefits and drawbacks of the procedure. Giambattista said that she became involved with the anti-circumcision cause during her first pregnancy, when she started to research the procedure.

"The more you know, the more you're against it," Giambattista said.

Still, according to the World Health Organization, research shows that male infant circumcision can yield health benefits, and that circumcision during infancy has a lower rate of surgical complications than adolescent or adult circumcision. The rate of adverse events during male infant circumcision ranges from 0.2 to 0.4 percent of all procedures, according to the WHO.

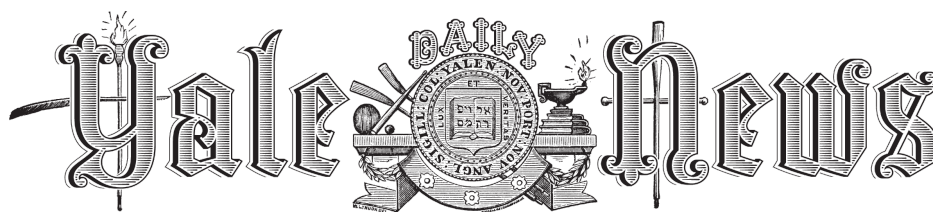
WHO research also found that male circumcision reduces heterosexually transmitted HIV infection in men by up to 60 percent.

A 2007 article from the Canadian Urological Association Journal lists eight reasons to circumcise newborn males, including a decreased risk of urinary tract infections, protection against penile cancer and improved sexual function.

The last protest in the series will be held Monday in Jersey City.

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