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Protesters to AAP: No More Circumcision!

— Intact America protest is now a regular feature at AAP meetings

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WASHINGTON -- A small, but vocal, group of anti-circumcision protesters gather daily outside the convention center here where the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#) is meeting -- and they promise to keep doing so until the AAP backs off its "permissive" stance on circumcision.

The protesters, including a group of men dressed in white with crotch areas stained red, represent various groups opposed to routine infant circumcision.

"It's an ethics argument -- not a science or medical argument," said Georganne Chapin, JD, MPhil, and founding executive director of [Intact America](#), one of the groups at the protest. "We want [doctors] to tell parents that it's not medically necessary and they don't have a right to their son's body. We can't carve up our daughters, we shouldn't be carving up our sons and they can stop."

The protesters were mostly young to middle-aged men and women. Several of the men shouted, "My body! My rights!" at conference attendees, while one woman said loudly to a passerby "Sorry your mom took your foreskin!"

Chapin, who founded the group 7 years ago, said Intact America has been protesting at the AAP annual meeting since 2009. She chose not to circumcise her son because she was concerned about pain to the baby, and when he thanked her for her decision as an 18 year-old, she realized that this was a "men's issue."

Another protester, Bill Cooney, of Rockville Centre, N.Y., said that 6 years ago, he was not allowed to take his family home from the hospital until his son was circumcised. When he asked for his son not to have the procedure, the nurse denied his request.

"I was asked to have my son taken off the schedule, but I was told only the doctor could do so," Cooney said. "To this day, I am astounded by the lack of respect for their patients that so many American doctors seem to have."

Self-characterized "regret mom" Niki Sawyers, of Philadelphia, said that she was "lied to, coerced and solicited" into circumcision when her 13 month-old son was a newborn.

"Obviously it was traumatic for my son," she said. "Now I'm just trying to inform parents because the doctors are not informing parents."

[Douglas Diekema, MD](#), of the AAP Circumcision Taskforce, is familiar with Intact America's annual protest.

"Part of the reason they're out there is to try to embarrass or convince the AAP to support their view," he said. "These groups are here to try to influence pediatricians."

The AAP released [a policy statement on circumcision in 2012](#), which found that the benefits to circumcision related to sexually transmitted disease and fewer urinary tract infections for newborn infants outweighed the relatively small risks of the procedure. But Diekema described the AAP's position as a permissive, rather than a strong, recommendation.

"What we said was this is an option parents should have, without a strong recommendation from us, but there is sufficient benefit that it's more than justified," he said.

Chapin said she has seen several pediatricians give the group a "quiet thumbs up" in support, but that they don't want to take a public stand against their profession.

With protesters traveling from as far as California and even Alaska, Chapin predicted her group and others will be at next year's AAP meeting in San Francisco, still trying to communicate their message to pediatricians.

"The baby is their patient, the parent is not their patient. They don't have consent," said Chapin. "You can't do a nose job on a two-year old, you can't ask them to cut off all his fingers. People will say that's a ridiculous analogy, and I say, well you've got ten fingers -- you only have one penis."

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