Why American Parents Circumcise Their Sons: An Integrative Review of Literature

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Why American Parents Circumcise Their Sons: An Integrative Review of Literature

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Abstract:
Since medical evidence supports both pros and cons of routine neonatal male circumcision, expectant and new parents are left to make the decision to circumcise their sons on their own. There is limited research as to why American parents choose to circumcise their newborn sons. The purpose of this integrative literature review was to identify the reasons behind parental decision making in neonatal male circumcision in the United States. Understanding motivating factors in parental decision-making can highlight areas of prenatal education for expectant parents. The primary motivating factor for parents choosing to circumcise their newborn sons was that their son's penis would look like the father's. A secondary factor was the cost or availability of the procedure. Surprisingly little heed was given to the perceived medical benefits of the procedure. Parents who choose to have their sons circumcised due to American cultural norms were resolute in their view, whereas parents who left their son's penis intact tended to examine relevant literature and expressed a primary concern with medical benefits rather than cultural adherence. Providers must ensure that parents are making the decision based on knowledge of the benefits and risks of the procedure rather than cultural patterns. Providers should provide education in order to ensure informed consent in obtaining.

Method
An integrative literature review was conducted utilizing these online databases: PubMed, The Cumulative Index of Nursing and Allied Health (CINAHL) Complete, ProQuest Nursing & Allied Health Source, and PsycInfo. The Health Belief Model was used as a framework for this paper.

Purpose
Circumcision rates have remained relatively steady in the United States varying slightly from 83% in the 1960s to 77% by 2010 (Mottis, 2014). With medical evidence supporting both pros and cons of the procedure, parents are left to make the decision to circumcise their sons. There is limited research as to why American parents choose to circumcise their newborn sons and said research has yet to be synthesized. The purpose of this integrative literature review is to identify the reasons behind parental decision making in neonatal male circumcision. Understanding motivating factors in parental decision making can highlight areas of prenatal education for expectant parents.

Results and Implications
- The desire for a son's penis to aesthetically resemble his father was the primary motivating factor in parental decision-making.
- The availability of the procedure while the mother was in the hospital was a secondary motivating factor in parental decision making.
- The perceived health benefits of the procedure had little to no influence on parental decision making.

A review of the relevant literature has shown that routine infant circumcision in the United States is perpetuated by cultural norms that are handed down generation to generation. It would seem that the perceived seriousness of the decision is not heavily weighed. The majority of parents do not stop to ask why the procedure is done and therefore, are not basing their decision off of current recommendations (affirmative or non-affirmative) rather they are choosing to do what has always been done. This finding is disconcerting as the 2012 AAP recommendation is based on the potential health benefits of the procedure not the psychological or social aspects of normativity. Are parents truly giving informed consent? Or are they merely consenting to the procedure because it is what has always been done? This is of particular concern to the nurse who statistically is the first, and sometimes only, medical professional to ask expectant or new parents about circumcision (Mielke, 2013). Care needs to be given that informed consent is obtained and that parents have weighed the decision with due process.

Background
In male infants circumcision refers to the surgical operation in which the foreskin is removed from the glans penis, clamped down and discarded leaving the head of the penis exposed. The practice of circumcision is older than recorded history, but became a western cultural norm in the United States as a means of reducing male sexual pleasure during coitus as far back as 3000 B.C. It would seem that the perceived seriousness of the decision is not heavily weighed. The majority of parents do not stop to ask why the procedure is done and therefore, are not basing their decision off of current recommendations (affirmative or non-affirmative) rather they are choosing to do what has always been done. This finding is disconcerting as the 2012 AAP recommendation is based on the potential health benefits of the procedure not the psychological or social aspects of normativity. Are parents truly giving informed consent? Or are they merely consenting to the procedure because it is what has always been done? This is of particular concern to the nurse who statistically is the first, and sometimes only, medical professional to ask expectant or new parents about circumcision (Mielke, 2013). Care needs to be given that informed consent is obtained and that parents have weighed the decision with due process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Article</th>
<th>Cost/Availability</th>
<th>Cultural Beliefs/Aesthetics</th>
<th>Health</th>
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<tr>
<td>Boxer, C.M., Simmons, L., York, R.J., Meyer, D., Quinn, T.C., &amp; Rosenthal, S.L. (2012)</td>
<td>“there were systemic issues such as timing that influenced the circumcision decision” (p160)</td>
<td>“In this study we found similar to another study, that social reasons were indicative of whether a child was circumcised or not, in both cases of circumcision and uncircumcision” (p211)</td>
<td>“The factor analysis demonstrates that if parents believe the benefits of circumcision outweigh the risks they were also more likely to report that parents would have their sons” (p113)</td>
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<td>Castro, J.C., Jones, D.L., Lopez, M.R., Deeke, K., Banadas, I., &amp; Weiss, S. M. (2010)</td>
<td>“The majority of the participants in the study indicated they would be willing to circumcise their child if circumcision was free of change” (p3)</td>
<td>“The most common reason for circumcision were to be like dad (69%) and social acceptance among peers (69%) which were followed closely by health reasons (59%) (p134)”</td>
<td>“We had anticipated an overall increase in respondent support for circumcision after the HIV/ HIV testing but this was not observed. Our study findings were consistent with prior studies that demonstrated parental views on circumcision remain unchanged regardless of discussions with health care providers or distributed information” (p135-134)</td>
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<td>Neuman, M., Spencer, A.L., Drogozinski, A.R. et al. (2014)</td>
<td>Newborn circumcision outcomes. Are parents satisfied with the results?</td>
<td>“Parents more likely to elect circumcision had private insurance, higher socioeconomic status, fewer comorbidities and were white or Black” (p671)</td>
<td>“Parents who were more likely to believe that the benefits of circumcision outweighed the risks also believed that aesthetic reasons for circumcision were of primary importance” (p11)</td>
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<td>Mielke, R. T. (2013)</td>
<td>Counseling parents who are considering newborn male circumcision.</td>
<td>“Among both parents who chose RIC and those who kept their sons penis natural, the circumcision status of other males in the family was influential in the decision” (p191)</td>
<td>“Parents who were more likely to believe that the benefits of circumcision outweighed the risks also believed that aesthetic reasons for circumcision were of primary importance” (p11)</td>
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<td>Mitchell, K.M. (2015)</td>
<td>Shaped decision making for routine infant circumcision: A pilot study.</td>
<td>“Categorizing these results shows that the health care system was unable to unprepared to provide NBC in 57% of responses” (p190)</td>
<td>“Parents who were more likely to believe that the benefits of circumcision outweighed the risks also believed that aesthetic reasons for circumcision were of primary importance” (p11)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Otto, R., Evans, G., Bonici, C., Popas, D. &amp; Leslie, J. (2016)</td>
<td>Why Desired Newborn Circumcisions Are Not Performed A Survey.</td>
<td>“Parents who were more likely to believe that the benefits of circumcision outweighed the risks also believed that aesthetic reasons for circumcision were of primary importance” (p11)</td>
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<td>Zalaznick, J. M., Livingston, P. (2015)</td>
<td>Parental Decision Making in Male Circumcision.</td>
<td>“Parents who were more likely to believe that the benefits of circumcision outweighed the risks also believed that aesthetic reasons for circumcision were of primary importance” (p11)</td>
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