Factors Influencing The Decision to Circumcise a Male Newborn

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FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DECISION TO CIRCUMCISE A MALE NEWBORN
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Circumcision is performed on upwards of 90 percent of all male newborns in the United States, making it the most common surgical procedure performed in this country. At the same time, this elective procedure is recommended by neither the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Family Physicians, nor the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology. Rising medical costs are spurring a growing number of third party payers to drop optional procedures like circumcision from coverage. In an effort to identify factors that influence a parent’s decision to circumcise, we distributed a standardized questionnaire to parents asking them to rate a list of factors as strongly influential, somewhat influential or not influential to their decision. This questionnaire was distributed to mothers and fathers under the care of Fort Wayne Pediatrics within 24 hours of delivering a full-term male infant at Parkview Memorial Hospital, Fort Wayne. There were few significant differences between mothers and fathers for the factors listed. When data for both parents were pooled, we found that issues of health have greater influence than issues of culture and religion on the choice of circumcision, particularly to prevent infection and cancer, maintain good hygiene, and avoid the necessity of this procedure in the future. Interestingly, the opinion of obstetricians, family physicians, pediatricians, nurses and Lamaze instructors had little influence on the decision when compared to that of relatives. Also of interest, only a minority of parents surveyed would consider changing their decision if their insurance no longer covered the procedure, if studies existed showing a negligible difference in infection rates between circumcised and uncircumcised males who maintain proper hygiene, or if studies existed showing no difference in the self-images of circumcised and uncircumcised boys. Results may be useful to more effectively educate parents about the indications, contraindications and complications of neonatal circumcision.