

J. Steven Svoboda addressing the Thirteenth meeting of International Society for Sexually Transmitted Disease Research, Denver, Colorado. Talk entitled: "Where Science, Ethics and Human Rights Meet."

### Matthew Price Case Update

A legal case relating to a circumcision which is of potentially critical importance is ongoing in New Jersey, and we wanted to update all of you on the history of the case and on important recent events. This past August, a New Jersey trial court authorized the mother of three-year-old Matthew Price to have the young boy circumcised against the wishes of his father, Jim Price. No religious issue is involved in the case. The circumcision was authorized by the court despite the fact that the alleged "need" for the circumcision was caused by the couple having followed an ill-informed pediatrician's forced retraction of Matthew's foreskin, and now that that erroneous practice has stopped even the claimed reason for the procedure no longer exists. Subsequently, public outcry forced the urologist to cancel at the last minute the scheduled date of October 12, 2000 for performing the procedure.

The father's appeals were denied at both trial court and appeals court levels, but he was granted a temporary ten-day stay of the circumcision by the appeals court. He then presented

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Busy times lately. The ongoing Jim Price case (please see the article elsewhere on this page) is of course the most current and riveting matter with a breakout potential. ARC will help by participating with others in the filing of a "friend of the court" brief advising the court of our collective views on legal and human rights aspects of circumcision. From November 18-22, I represented ARC at the Fifth Jamaica Gender Transition Movement Leaders' Conference, in Port Antonio, Jamaica. Then from December 7-9, I will be travelling to Sydney, Australia for the 6<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Genital Integrity. Thanks to everyone who assisted our efforts this year by volunteering, helping support our work, or simply getting involved as an activist for genital integrity. A major series of events including a rally, a major educational event, and lobbying of Congress, is scheduled for the first weekend of April and the following days. Contact us or contact Amber Craig at [amberc@attglobal.net](mailto:amberc@attglobal.net) for more information.

Watch for our article with Bob Van Howe and ARC Board Member James Dwyer appearing soon in the Fall 2000 issue of the Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy entitled "Informed Consent for Neonatal Circumcision: An Ethical and Legal Conundrum." Also, please note that we now have our own website, at [www.arclaw.org](http://www.arclaw.org), thanks to Gary Burlingame. I wish you all a Merry Christmas, and/or a Happy Hanukkah, and a Happy New Year! Please drive carefully!

Steven Svoboda

### New Mexico Presentation

On September 26, 2000, I was able to participate in three very rewarding events in Santa Fe, New Mexico, thanks to the extremely gracious and well-executed organization and hosting efforts of Nurses for the Rights of the Child (NRC) (particularly Mary Conant and Betty Sperlich as well as Mary's delightful husband, RN David Fleming) and Dr. Chris Fletcher and his wife Ann MacKinnon.

Dr. Fletcher is a family physician at St. Vincent Hospital as well as an assistant clinical professor at the University of New Mexico Medical School. He and I gave a talk entitled, "Rethinking Newborn Circumcision: what physicians who perform them think, and what lawyers want them to know." Chris spoke for the first half hour about a doctor's perspective on circumcision and discussed his survey of physicians regarding their beliefs and practices related to circumcision. I followed with a survey of legal and human rights considerations and brief overviews regarding the lack of medical justification and the lack of ethical rationale for physicians to act as brokers for a cultural or religious procedure.

More than eighty-five physicians and other medical personnel attended, virtually packing the room. Attendees included three members of the hospital's

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### ARC, NOCIRC, and NOHARMM Address ACLU

On Sunday, September 10, Tom Morris of NOHARMM, Tina Kimmel of NOCIRC-Berkeley, and I accepted an invitation to attend the monthly meeting of the San Francisco-based Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual-Transgender-Intersexual chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). We presented a resolution on male circumcision which we believe the ACLU in general and the GLBTI chapter in particular should adopt and take on as one of the issues they address. This ACLU chapter only recently broadened the name of their chapter to encompass the interests of intersexuals, and we felt the chapter might be open to addressing male circumcision as a concern.

I overviewed medical concerns, discussed legal and human rights issues regarding circumcision, and stated why we felt this is an issue which should be of interest to the chapter. Tina talked about the religious issues, which were a concern or interest of several of the board members. Then all three of us fielded questions. We distributed a number of handouts including (thanks to Tina) Ronald Goldman's book "Questioning Jewish Circumcision."

We all felt we were very well-received. The questions were

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## Attorneys for the Rights of the Child

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## Premier Issue

This is the premier issue of the Attorneys for the Rights of the Child Newsletter, which has been established to keep you informed on the progress being made in our work to protect children's right to genital integrity. All work done for and by ARC is strictly voluntary. If possible please help us to continue on with our work, and to provide for our expenses by forwarding your tax deductible contribution to: Attorneys for the Rights of the Child, 2961 Ashby Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94705.

## Matthew Price Update

(cont. from page 1) the case to the New Jersey Supreme Court, which decided that the issue would receive a new hearing from the original trial court judge. This hearing is currently scheduled for December 4, 2000, but is expected to be delayed until January 2001. This case has sparked significant publicity in New Jersey and around the country, including well over a dozen newspaper articles and radio and television shows, thereby helping raise awareness about proper care of the genitally intact child.

A well-known attorney, Edward J. O'Donnell, of the law firm of Skoloff and Wolfe of Livingston, was appointed guardian ad litem to represent the boy's interests. O'Donnell represented Baby M's biological father, William Stern of Tenafly, in his struggle against the child's surrogate mother after she refused to give up the baby girl, who was born in 1986. A coalition of organizations and attorneys recently prepared a "friends of the court" brief for submission to the judge by NOCIRC.

## New Mexico Presentation

(cont. from page 1) ethics committee, a representative from the state Medicaid department, a representative of the malpractice insurance company which covers 90% of New Mexico's doctors, physician Steven Lucero (one of the most prominent physicians at the hospital who is still performing circumcisions), physician Alan Rogers (who is in the NRC video and who does not perform circumcisions), and one elderly man who is a rabbi.

The presentation was very well received. One Jewish doctor said warmly that it was "very convincing." After the talk, Dr. Rogers asked about the potential liability of malpractice insurers, and I replied that they could definitely liable, as they have been in the past.

The rabbi and I had an extended private discussion in which I was able to correct his misimpression that circumcision could protect against cervical cancer in women. He asked me about the cost of the procedure, and when he objected to my use of the term "mutilation," I explained why applying the term to circumcision is fully consistent with its definition. He asserted to me that he had never heard of a complication from a circumcision performed by a mohel! When he raised the cleanliness issue, I pointed out that if that were a valid argument, it would be even more applicable to justify female genital cutting.

Later that afternoon, I was interviewed for a half hour on KSFR 90.7 in Santa Fe by host Diego Mulligan for "The Journey Home." Mr. Mulligan is apparently very well-informed on the topic and asked extremely perceptive questions.

That evening, Ann MacKinnon and Chris Fletcher hosted a reception for the afternoon talk at their lovely house in Santa Fe County, just outside the city limits. Approximately 35 people attended, including many who were unable to hear the noon-time presentation. At their request, I gave a summary of my presentation at the hospital, and a very engaging and profitable discussion ensued among all who were still there.

I was grateful for the opportunity to reconnect with Chris, Mary, Betty, and NRC member Mary-Rose Booker (whom I had only previously met five years earlier at the protest at Marin General Hospital) and to meet for the first time NRC members Naomi Landau, Sivan Wind, and Patricia Worth, as well as David. Thanks again to Chris, Ann, Mary, David, and Betty.

— J. Steven Svoboda

## ACLU Address

(cont. from page 1) intelligent and demonstrated openness to our message and an interest in genuinely considering our proposal. Board members are currently discussing the issue among themselves and will be getting back to us with any further concerns or questions.

Here is the text of the resolution:

Proposed Resolution on Genital Integrity  
The ACLU Northern California LGBTI Chapter affirms the 1997 Valencia Declaration on Sexual Rights which urges societies to create the conditions to satisfy the needs for the full development of the individual and respect individual SEXUAL RIGHTS, including rights defined in Article 2, namely: "The right to autonomy, integrity and safety of the body. This right encompasses control and enjoyment of our own bodies, free from torture, mutilation and violence of any sort."

The Chapter affirms the rights of all children to bodily integrity and eventual self-determination. This includes the right to intact genitalia and freedom from customary, surgical alterations of their genitals (i.e., those done in the absence of clear and present medical conditions threatening the health or life of the child).

The Northern CA LGBTI Chapter urges the California state and national offices of the ACLU to adopt similar resolutions affirming a child's right to his or her genital integrity;

The Northern CA LGBTI Chapter urges state and national offices of the ACLU to actively participate in litigation to secure children's rights to genital integrity and eventual self-determination and in cases where these rights have been violated;

The Northern CA LGBTI Chapter seeks membership and participation by those in the genital integrity communities (those opposing circumcision of healthy, unconsenting male and female children and those opposing intersex surgery on unconsenting children). — J. Steven Svoboda

## Book Review

*Circumcision: The World's Most Controversial Surgery.* By David L. Gollaher. New York: Basic Books, 2000. 253 pages.

Historian David L. Gollaher has a tale to tell us of the world's most controversial and the United States' most frequent surgery, circumcision. Invented so long ago that its origins are lost in the shadows of history, circumcision has proven a stunning persistent practice, found in various forms in many countries (cont. page 8)

# Attorneys for the Rights of the Child

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## ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

*Over the last couple of years, Attorneys for the Rights of the Child has been active in a number of areas. Our activities include:*

### Legal Support and Legal Representation

We have been actively participating as both attorneys of record and a legal support center on circumcision issues in cases chosen to advance the struggle to secure equal protection for, and broaden judicial and public recognition of, children's legal and human rights to bodily integrity and self-determination. We regularly receive requests from plaintiffs for referrals to attorneys familiar with genital mutilation issues. We refer each of these cases to appropriate attorneys for case evaluation. Often this results in lawsuits being filed. We remain active in many of these cases as a resource and legal strategist in consultation with the attorney and the plaintiff.

### Denver Conference on Sexually Transmitted Diseases

Our presentation on July 13, 1999 in Denver before approximately 200 physicians at the Thirteenth Meeting of the International Society for Sexually Transmitted Diseases Research was well received. Our talk, entitled, "Where, Science, Ethics, and Human Rights Meet," concluded the panel on "Male Circumcision, STD, and HIV: Science, Ethics, and Controversy." Comments after the panel ran overwhelmingly in favor of not performing non-medically indicated surgery on consenting minors.

### Jamaica Conferences

In late November 2000, ARC participated in the Fifth Jamaica Gender Transition Movement Leaders' Conference, a week-long strategy meeting of leaders in various aspects of the gender transition movement. In 1999 and 1997, we also participated in this very valuable and rewarding event organized by author Dr. Warren Farrell, each time delivering presentations updating the participants on ARC's work and on developments in the movement to protect children's rights to genital integrity. Among various promising developments, ARC developed closer ties with the Men's Health Network and the National Black Men's Health Network.

### Chicago Conference

On April 16, 1999, we presented Friday's closing talk at the Chicago "Circumcision Update: Medical, Ethical and Legal Issues" conference organized by NOCIRC. Our presentation was entitled "National and International Laws Defending Children from Genital Mutilation." The presentation surveyed pertinent statutory and human rights law and also delved into an overview of the intactivist political movement which is one of the leading forces today struggling to "put the heart back in the law." Immediately following this presentation, we participated on a "panel of experts" along with other activists.

### Selected Presentations

"Comparative Analysis of Body Mutilation Practices on Children," Sixth International Symposium on Genital Integrity, Sydney, Australia, December 8, 2000.

"Rethinking Newborn Circumcision: What Physicians who Perform Them Think, and What Lawyers Want Them to Know," with Dr. Chris Fletcher, St. Vincent Hospital, Santa Fe, New Mexico, September 26, 2000.

On September 10, 2000, Tim Hammond of NOHARMM, Tina Kimmel of NOCIRC-Berkeley, and Steven Svoboda made a presentation to the Gay-Lesbian-Bisexual-Transgender-Intersexual chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) as to why the chapter and the ACLU should adopt a proposed resolution on genital integrity.

In August 1999, I travelled to New York City and gave two presentations on circumcision on August 5 and August 10, 1999. The first took place at Caravan of Dreams restaurant with Laurie Evans of NOCIRC of New York—Mid-Hudson Valley, and the second was sponsored by the Wetlands organization and co-presented with anti-FGM activist Rana Badri of Equality Now! The audience response was extremely gratifying at both events, as many audience members had their eyes opened for the first time to the harm caused by male circumcision.

On April 6, 1999, along with Tim Hammond and Leland Traidman, both of NOHARMM, and again on November 4, 1999, without any co-presenters, we gave very well-received 1.5-hour presentations regarding circumcision in a class on male sexuality at the University of California at Berkeley.

#### Selected Media Work

Appeared with host Diego Mulligan on "The Journey Home," a program presented by KSFR 90.7-Santa Fe.

Interviewed on October 6, 2000 by [East Brunswick, New Jersey] Home News & Tribune regarding Matthew Price case, and interviewed regarding ARC's work for an article in the Daily Californian entitled "Group Derides Foreskin Removal" on November 3, 2000.

We were extensively interviewed in Ottawa on May 1, 1999 by TV Ontario in a program entitled "Singing the Gender Blues" which was broadcast in September 1999. In the fall of 1999, we also appeared on the New York City cable television program "Accent on Wellness." We have been interviewed by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), by 20/20 for their recent feature on circumcision, by *Men's Fitness* magazine for an article on circumcision they are preparing for their July 1999 issue, by *Bay Area Baby/Bay Area Parent*, by *Brooklyn Bridge*, and of course by *Men's Health* for the excellent article it published last year. We have been quoted regarding the AAP policy statement in various publications and by various wire services including Associated Press, Agence France Presse and *Al Akhbar*, a leading Egyptian newspaper.

#### Selected Publications

"Informed Consent for Neonatal Circumcision: An Ethical and Legal Conundrum," J. Steven Svoboda, Robert S. Van Howe, and James Dwyer, *Journal of Contemporary Health Law and Policy*, Fall 2000.

"Circumcision of Boys: A Serious Male Health Problem," J. Steven Svoboda, Gregory J. Boyle, and ARC Board Member Christopher P. Price, *Everyman*, May/June 2000.

"Circumcision of Healthy Boys: Criminal Assault?," Gregory J. Boyle, Ph.D., J. Steven Svoboda, ARC Board Member Christopher P. Price, and J. Neville Turner, *Journal of Law & Medicine*, February 2000, [www.cirp.org/library/legal/boyle1/](http://www.cirp.org/library/legal/boyle1/).

"Attaining International Acknowledgement of Male Genital Mutilation as a Human Rights Violation—An Annotated 'Written Intervention.'" *Male and Female Circumcision: Medical, Legal, and Ethical Considerations in Paediatric Practice*, edited by George C. Denniston, Frederick Hodges and Marilyn Fayre Milos (London and New York: Plenum Press, May 1999).

"Involuntary Circumcision: The Legal Issues," with R. S. Van Howe, James G. Dwyer, and Christopher P. Price, *British Journal of Urology International*, Volume 83, Supplement No. 1, January 1999.

# Attorneys for the Rights of the Child

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An international network of attorneys and supporters now addresses the multi-faceted issue of genital mutilation of children, particularly the practice of male circumcision. **Attorneys for the Rights of the Child (ARC)** is a non-profit organization founded to secure equal protection for, and broaden judicial and public recognition of, children's legal and human rights to bodily integrity and self-determination. ARC's network of attorneys can assist families whose sons were circumcised without parental consent or below the "standard of care," and those whose sons died from circumcision. ARC is also working to assist plaintiffs wishing to expand the legal standard on this issue to make legal relief potentially available to all involuntarily circumcised males. The medical profession will confront a challenge to this inhumane disfigurement of baby boys' genitals from an organization of legal professionals which it cannot afford to ignore.

Compelling reasons exist for strong concern among attorneys and the public about the various types of damage caused by circumcision. These including pain and suffering, psychological harm, behavioral changes, irreversible reduction or loss of full sexual function, and underreported tragic complications, including deaths. Moreover, no satisfactory medical justification for routine circumcision has ever been demonstrated. Committed attorneys have already undertaken a range of legal actions against circumcisers which have made critical contributions to reduce the rate of routine neonatal circumcision in the United States. The national rate has dropped from a high of 85% in the 1980s, to its present rate of less than 60%. However, ARC believes that no involuntary circumcisions can be tolerated in a civilized country.

ARC actively works to encourage professionals in relevant fields including medical ethics, psychology, the rights of children and youth, and the treatment of male sexual victimization to incorporate genital integrity awareness into their work. ARC representatives have published pertinent articles in legal and medical journals and have presented papers at relevant conferences in these and other fields. ARC responds immediately when the need arises for a position paper, letter, or press release related to our expertise.

Please refer to the other side of this page to learn more about the foundations of ARC's philosophy.

**To support the work of ARC and for more information contact:**

**J. Steven Svoboda, Esq. 2961 Ashby Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705 510-595-5550 (arc@post.harvard.edu)**

*J. Steven Svoboda is an attorney and former Harvard Law School Human Rights Fellow active in human rights law. His writings have been published by the British Journal of Urology, the Journal of Law & Medicine, in two books issued by Plenum Press, and in numerous other journals, and he has presented to the International Society for Sexually Transmitted Diseases Research and at the last two International Symposia on Sexual Mutilations.*

## **Attorneys for the Rights of the Child 2961 Ashby Avenue Berkeley, CA 94705**

Yes! I support the rights of children to physical integrity and self-determination by protecting them from circumcision. To help keep children's genitals whole and intact, I enclose my contribution or membership dues, which I understand are tax deductible when checks are made payable to NOCIRC and mailed to ARC.

☐ I wish to join ARC.

☐ \$35 (Member)

☐ \$100 (Sustaining)

☐ \$200 (Patron)

☐ I wish to pledge a monthly contribution to ARC.

Monthly: ☐ \$50 (\$1.67/day) ☐ \$30 (\$/day) ☐ \$15 (\$.50/day) ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_ /month

☐ I wish to make a contribution to ARC. ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$200 ☐ Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

## ***The Foundational Philosophy of Attorneys for the Rights of the Child***

A number of human rights documents appear to forbid infant male circumcision based on such important principles as the right to physical integrity, the right to freedom of religion, the right to the highest attainable standard of health, and the right to protection against torture. These documents bind the United States, either through our direct ratification of the treaty or under principles of customary international law. The many laws against female genital mutilation, contrasted with the discriminatory nature of excusing and tacitly condoning male genital mutilation, violate principles of equal protection under both international human rights law and American constitutional doctrines.

Our own cultural blindness must not be allowed to warp American law by insulating perpetrators of circumcision from liability under a broad range of legal theories. By understanding the medical and psychological harm caused by circumcision and by positioning ourselves to enforce the legal and human rights guarantees of physical integrity and self-determination, we can work for the best interests of children, by guaranteeing them equal protection under the law.

### **CIRCUMCISION'S HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES RELATIVE TO ARTICLES OF U.N. DOCUMENTS**

	Universal Declaration on Human Rights (UDHR)  UN General Assembly Resolution 217 A (III) -1948-	International Covenant on Civil & Political Rights (ICCPR)  UN General Assembly Resolution 2200 A (XXI) -1966-	International Covenant on Economic, Social & Rights (ICESCR)  UN General Assembly Resolution 2200 A (XXI) -1966-	Convention on The Rights of The Child (CRC)  UN General Assembly Resolution 44/25 -1989-
Self-Determination	Preamble, 1, 2	1	1	Preamble, 12.1
Physical & Moral Integrity	29, 1 - 2	6, 7	-	27, 41
Forced Labor & Traffic in Persons	23, 1 - 3	8	-	32, 34, 35, 36
Liberty & Security Of Person	3, 9, 12	9, 10, 11	-	16, 33, 37
Freedom of Religion Or Belief	18, 19	17, 18	-	14
Protection of Children	16.3, 25	23, 24	10	19
Physical & Mental Health	25	6.1	12	24
Against Genital Mutilation	Implied Throughout	Implied Throughout	Implied Throughout	Implied Throughout

Excerpted with permission from Universal Reproductive & Human Rights: Ordering Corrective Action  
against North American Circumcisers. Ch.1, "Introduction to the Urgent Human Rights Proposal"

(p.11) by Anastasios Zavales

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## ICGI WELCOMES AMA TO THE BATTLE FOR GENITAL INTEGRITY

SANTA CRUZ, CA – The American Medical Association (AMA), in a statement published on its website August 17, 2000, slammed neonatal circumcision, calling it a "non therapeutic" procedure which is performed for social reasons.

The AMA said the risks and adverse effects "mitigate" any possible slight medical benefit from neonatal circumcision. The AMA does not recommend circumcision and is now aligned with other medical organizations.

The AMA cited world medical opinion, which rejects neonatal circumcision as a beneficial operation. It said neonatal male circumcisions are uncommon in Europe, South and Central America, and Asia.

The AMA said a majority of boys in the U.S. still undergo non-therapeutic circumcisions.

The AMA called the incidence of non-therapeutic neonatal circumcisions in the U.S. "high" and called for doctors to provide complete information about the risks and adverse effects of neonatal circumcision and anesthesia to parents so that they can make a better informed decision. The AMA cited studies that show that doctors frequently do not provide adequate information and when they do it is often too late to be helpful to the parents in reaching an informed decision.

The AMA said most doctors (55%) still do not use anesthesia in spite of "clear evidence" of "brisk pain responses", and called for procedural anesthesia whenever a circumcision is performed.

Dr. Rio Cruz, an official of the ICGI, said, "The AMA's efforts to upgrade U.S. medical practice to world standards are commendable and bring us one step closer to the eventual demise of non-consented non-therapeutic genital alteration of children. Regrettably, the AMA has failed to provide information about the nature and physiological functions of the foreskin, and it has ignored bioethics and legal considerations. The AMA Committee On Ethical and Judicial Affairs should address this important issue at an early date."

Marilyn Fayre Milos, RN, executive director of the National Organization Of Circumcision Information Resource Centers commented, "It is going to be helpful having the power and prestige of the AMA thrown behind our efforts to increase the genital integrity of American children. We should soon be able to reduce the circumcision rate well below 50% with this new help from the AMA."



*With "Panel of Experts" at closing Symposium, "Circumcision Update: Medical and Legal Issues", Chicago, April 16, 1999. The panel includes left to right: Geoffrey Falk, Dr. James Snyder, Dr. Paul Fleiss, Marilyn Milos, Steven Svoboda, Mary Conant and Dr. George Deniston*

J. Steven Svoboda, Esq., Executive Director of Attorneys for the Rights of the Child observed, "While we welcome the overall prospective of the AMA, we are concerned that it looks as though the AMA is attempting to shift the liability from the surgeon who wields the scalpel to the parents. I don't think this is going to work because courts in various states have ruled that parents do not have the power to consent to the removal of healthy functional tissue from a minor. Moreover, a principle of pediatric bioethics states that 'health care providers have legal and ethical duties to their child patients to render competent Medical care someone else expresses.'"

The new AMA policy statement, "Neonatal Circumcision," may be viewed online at: <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/article/2036-2511.html>

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*This article by Amber Craig appeared on the May/June Mothering Magazine Website, "Off the Newsstands"*

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### Your Tax Dollars Are Financing Routine Infant Circumcision

Medicaid was designed to provide medically necessary services to children of underprivileged families. Unfortunately, most state Medicaid (or equivalent) programs continue to pay doctors and hospitals for routine non-therapeutic circumcision of newborn males, even though the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) does not recommend this procedure. A few states, including California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, and North Dakota have decided to use healthcare dollars more productively for medically beneficial services, and do not provide coverage for routine infant circumcision.

Recently the International Coalition for Genital Integrity (ICGI), a coalition of in-

ternational child advocacy organizations, contacted each state Medicaid program that currently funds medically unnecessary circumcisions with mixed results. Several program directors, such as Colorado and Michigan, were receptive to reviewing this issue within their state's Medicaid program. Other states, including Utah, North Carolina, Kentucky and South Carolina, refuse to consider revision of their current circumcision coverage policy.

To support efforts to eliminate your tax dollar funding of routine circumcision, contact your state's Department of Social Services to voice your concerns. You can also make your congressmen aware of your concerns by calling the Capitol at 202-225-3121. For more information about the ICGI's efforts to discontinue Medicaid funding of routine circumcision, please visit [www.icgi.org](http://www.icgi.org) or contact Amber Craig at 1-919-960-9276.

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### Fax Network Founded

In the February 2000 edition of the "Journal of Law and Medicine", the article "Circumcision of Healthy Boys: Criminal Assault?" by Gregory J Boyle, J. Steven Svoboda, Christopher P. Price and J. Neville Turner was published. The media response in Australia was almost immediate and the issue of routine circumcision was addressed in the press and radio. The result in Australia was a growing awareness of the legal rights of children to genital integrity.

In an effort to duplicate this media response in the United States, Steven Svoboda drafted a press release which was combined with reprints of the article and included in a media packet. Originally fifteen NOCIRC Centers (cont. page 8)

## Fax Network

(cont. from page 7) volunteered to fax/mail the press release and article. As word got out, additional individuals volunteered and soon there were nearly fifty people, representing twenty-seven states and Canada, engaged in contacting the media with the press release and article.

All major news outlets were contacted including many regional and local news organizations.

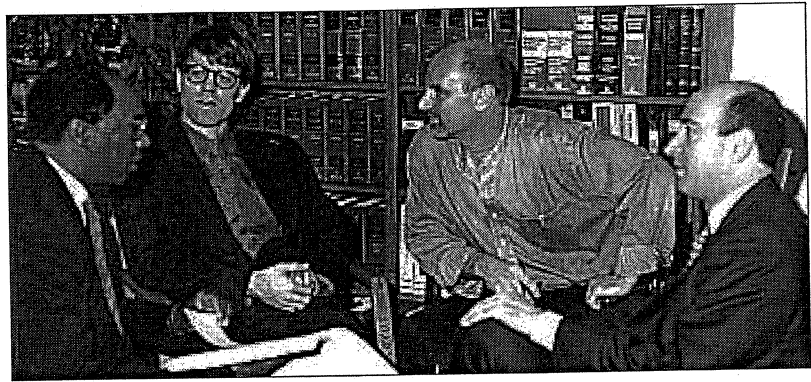
Recent articles in *Men's Health*, *GQ*, *Esquire*, and *Hustler* indicate a growing willingness to address the circumcision issue. In addition, several recent fax efforts have caught the attention of the media and slowly we're being heard. If you have a fax and would like to become part of this network, contact Al Fields at: 610.489.6505 or albfie@netcarrier.com. — Al Fields

## Review

(cont. from page 2) and in many historical eras as well, of course, as in some leading religions. It is difficult to imagine how any history could more fascinatingly combine the strangest idiosyncrasies of sexuality, religion, and psychology. Gollaher makes it clear in the book's preface via a compelling "thought experiment" that no one would today dare to invent circumcision if it didn't already exist. And yet, Gollaher notes, so deeply intertwined with certain cultures and worldviews is it that it is devilishly hard to recognize for what it is.

Anyone who fears that our culture stands alone in its strange obsessions need only read a few pages of this book to disabuse oneself of this notion. The Egyptians, the likely inventors of circumcision, were preoccupied with the body's excretions and secretions. It was the Egyptians who first promoted circumcision as advancing not only physical hygiene but also moral, spiritual and intellectual refinement. Thousands of years later, Victorian physicians in the United States resurrected this same parallel to justify the same procedure.

It is impossible to imagine that anyone could do a better job than Gollaher does of combing through millenia of arcane primary sources and distilling a remarkably accessible summary which nevertheless contains documentation sufficient to satisfy the most exacting scholar. It is fascinating to see him pull together in one place and provide more detail about many different authors and issues relating to circumcision's history, including the Egyptian roots and Philo's and Maimonides' early writings about Judaism and circumcision. In the



Left to right: ARC Board member Charles Bonner, Executive Director J. Steven Svoboda, ARC graphic designer Jeff Borg, and Advisory Board member Martin Novoa

Twelfth Century, Moses Maimonides noted that circumcision served the same spiritual purposes accomplished by castration, without depriving a man of his fertility.

Starting with Maimonides, numerous authors over the past centuries have recommended circumcision BECAUSE it reduced the sexual pleasure for the man, putting the lie to those circumcision promoters today who, stunningly, still attempt to deny that removing half the surface area of the penis would affect sexual response. As early as the Thirteenth Century, a French follower of Maimonides noted that the procedure reduced sexual pleasure for both the man AND THE WOMAN, thereby freeing both from lascivious desire.

In religious symbolism, physical circumcision represents spiritual circumcision, or circumcision of the heart. Gollaher's detailed religious history suggests that there is almost no limit to the bizarreness which lies at the intersection of psychology, circumcision, and religion. One author suggests that gentiles, by accepting Christ's sacrifice of his blood on the cross, are thereby vicariously circumcised. Gollaher manages to avoid raising stylistic eyebrows as he recounts to us the story of the search for Christ's foreskin and the numerous claims by its supposed possessors. Anything combining the penis and religion obviously fascinated our ancestors. Other cultures are no slouches at creativity either. In Madagascar, immediately following a circumcision, an older male relative of the boy's puts the foreskin between two pieces of banana and gobbled down the sandwich!

Chapter Four is equally invaluable in its detailed recounting of the origin of the notion of circumcision as a panacea and a routine prophylactic measure. Lewis A. Sayre, a highly prominent and apparently completely well-intentioned surgeon in the 1870's, played a leading role in convincing

the American public that circumcision could prevent a now ludicrously expansive list of diseases. Displaying a nice talent for understatement, Gollaher ironically notes, "The ultimate popularity of circumcision depended not on convincing normal men to undergo the ordeal of surgery, but on targeting a group of patients who could not object." Gollaher again proves his adeptness at distilling complexities, noting that in order to induce parents to select it for their infants, surgeons had to persuade them that it was a minor operation, neither dangerous nor unduly painful. This was facilitated by two medical advances appearing around this time, asepsis and effective anesthesia. Gollaher also takes the time to carefully debunk all asserted justifications of circumcision based on elimination of diseases. He notes that the American Academy of Pediatrics has clearly denounced female genital mutilation while issuing a number of statements about circumcision which have been "models of ambiguity." Gollaher goes on to examine the striking parallels between rationales for male circumcision in this country and female genital mutilation in Africa. He acerbically writes that "the themes the Western world abhors [in female genital mutilation]—removing part of the genitals to reduce sexual pleasure, carving children's bodies to conform to certain social ideals, visiting pain on helpless children—are all fully present in the history of male circumcision."

The same knife that cuts a baby girl can cut a baby boy. As one anti-FGM activist once said, "Pain is pain." We all need to work together so that boys can be boys and girls can be girls, with all body parts intact, and hopefully all possibilities intact as well. — J. Steven Svoboda