
“The GMC hides behind parliament, suggesting it is not for them to make a judgement about the legality of male circumcision ... Why are none of the institutions willing to consider framing circumcision as male genital mutilation?”

Men matter too

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is wrong and we have rightly legislated against this as an obvious contravention of a child's human rights. However, very large numbers of male children still undergo a form of genital mutilation: it's called circumcision. Virtually all circumcisions are for religious and cultural reasons, and are not medically indicated.¹ I have avoided certain topics such as this over the years, too afraid of the anger lying in my email inbox. But even upsetting truths need to be said.

We legally allow the continued mutilation of baby boys. The GMC condones registered doctors to carry out this act without any threat to the doctor's registration. The GMC hides behind parliament, suggesting it is not for them to make a judgement about the legality of male circumcision. While parliament is banning smacking of children, frets about intimate partner abuse, and seeks to ever more intrude in micromanaging all family life, it allows this practice to continue without question. *Why* are none of the institutions willing to consider framing circumcision as male genital mutilation? This debate is kicked into the long grass, waiting a legal case or some expert panel of ethicists and worthy theologians to rule on it. No one wants to make a decision or even a comment. So it just keeps happening.

So let's deconstruct the argument. Many academics and scholars defend circumcision, asserting that it offers health benefits. But let's be absolutely direct: there is no benefit to non-medical circumcision. There are potential harms both physically and emotionally. Importantly and fundamentally, the child gives no consent to this permanent disfigurement. Reflect on the fact that it is registered doctors carrying out this procedure.

There are certainly cultural or religious sensitivities, but there are also numerous precedents where religious and cultural practices such as forced marriage and polygamy have been banned (indeed there is a very long list should you wish to google the topic).

This is another case of society being blind

to evident reverse sexism and boys being valued less than girls.

It is time we rethink circumcision. Time for faith groups to review their doctrines and question whether this act has any role in a modern interpretation of any religion. We need people from within communities and religious groups to speak out against circumcision. But it is most definitely time too for the profession and, in particular, the GMC to take a stance, show some leadership, and question the unquestionable.

The medical profession has the power to force the debate. It is time to stop non-medical circumcision because it is bad medicine and an obvious infringement of a child's human right to decide.

Society must open its eyes and see that men matter too.

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