Male Circumcision Lowers HIV Rates in Women as Well

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Male circumcision, which has been found to reduce female-to-male transmission of HIV by 60 percent, also reduces women's likelihood of acquiring the virus, although by a smaller 15 percent margin, according to a study reported by aidsmap and presented at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) in Boston. Addressing a major concern of skeptics, the study also found that circumcision did not affect rates of extramarital condom use.

The study was conducted in Orange Farm, South Africa, the site of the first of three major randomized controlled trials that in the mid-2000s provided proof that male circumcision could be levied as an effective HIV prevention tool. Since 2008, when a voluntary medical male circumcision (VMMC) center was established in Orange Farm, the proportion of circumcised local men has jumped from 15 percent to 53 percent. A study published in September 2013 found that the three-year increase in local circumcision rates between 2008 and 2011 was responsible for a 19 percent reduction in HIV prevalence among men when compared to what the prevalence was projected to be had there been no increase in cicrumcision rates.

In the current study, 30 percent of the women polled reported sex only with circumcised men. The HIV prevalence was 22.4 percent among these women, compared with 36.6 percent among women who had sex with some or all uncircumcised men. After controlling for various factors, the researchers found that male circumcision conferred a 15 percent reduction in the risk of women acquiring HIV.

Three quarters of the women reported preferring sex with circumcised men, citing their belief that these men were less likely to have HIV. Just one in 10 believed that if they had sex with a man who had HIV that his circumcision would confer partial or complete protection on the woman. Ninety percent of the women understood that circumcised men could still acquire the virus.

The proportion of women who expressed a willingness to have their male children circumcised rose from 83 percent to 96 percent between 2008 and 2012.

To read the aidsmap story, click here.

To read a POZ feature article about circumcision as an HIV prevention tool and about the vocal minority of skeptics who question the validity of the research supporting such measures, click

here.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/article/circumcision-women-25346-9170