‘Stronger or Tougher’
Reasons for penile cutting in Papua New Guinea

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on behalf of the Acceptability of Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention in Papua New Guinea Study Team

HIV in Papua New Guinea

- More than 90% all HIV infections in Oceania are in PNG
- 34,100 people living with HIV in 2009
- 3,200 new HIV infections in 2009
- 1,300 HIV related deaths 2009
- Main transmission heterosexual
- National HIV Prevalence 15-49 yrs 0.9%
  - Southern 1.17%
  - Highlands 1.02%
  - Momase 0.63%
  - New Guinea Islands 0.61%
- Surveillance data suggest some levelling off in spread of HIV in PNG

Male Circumcision and HIV

- Clinical trials in Africa have show male circumcision can reduce HIV acquisition in men by 60%
- WHO/UNAIDS recommend that Male Circumcision
  - be recognized as an additional strategy in a comprehensive HIV prevention package in populations where HIV is primarily heterosexually acquired, there is a generalized epidemic and relatively few men are circumcised.
  - be evidence based and responsive to the local contexts
- Male circumcision is a prioritized research area in the 2008-2013 Papua New Guinea National AIDS Council Research Agenda

Investigating Male Circumcision in Papua New Guinea

The Acceptability of Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention in PNG study is at 4 sites in PNG where people from across the country come to study or work.

- Describe and categorise male genital cutting
- Examine social, cultural and religious understandings and practices of male genital cutting
- Assess the capacity of health providers to deliver male circumcision services.

Data Collection

- 869 male & 520 female structured questionnaires
- 40 male & 16 female semi-structured individual interviews
- 36 male & 10 female Focus Group Discussions
- 309 male clinical examination by medical professional

Ethics approval by JCU, DWU, PAU and PNG National AIDS Council
Demographics of Participants

- Age of Respondents
- Marital Status Participants
- Province of Origin
- Church Affiliation

Types of Penile Cuts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Frequency &amp; Number</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No foreskin cut</td>
<td>435 (n=369)</td>
<td>The prepuce has not been cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longitudinal foreskin cut</td>
<td>470 (n=420)</td>
<td>Any form of longitudinal incision of the prepuce which does not remove the prepuce but exposes the glans</td>
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<tr>
<td>Circumferential foreskin cut</td>
<td>100 (n=88)</td>
<td>Full removal of the prepuce with full exposure of glans</td>
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Age and Foreskin Cutter

- Average age longitudinal cut 17.0 years (Range 2-38)
- Average age circumferential cut 14.8 years (Range 1-30)

Location of Foreskin Cutting

- Location of Foreskin Cutting
  - bush/plantation
  - clinic/hospital
  - traditional man’s house
  - urban house
  - school
  - river
  - village

Tool Used to Cut Foreskin

- Percentages of Participants

Remove foreskin if reduce risk of HIV

- No Penile Cut: Remove if Reduce Risk of HIV
- Already Split: Complete Removal if Reduce Risk of HIV
### Reasons for Penile Cutting

#### Cultural
- Cultural
- Health
- Sexual
- Biblical
- Peer influence
- Partners influence
- Parents decision

#### Reason – Cultural

**Cultural Practice**

Taim yu kaim through long ski [process of] man go to the initiation ceremony go attend long and ask [your] name. Yu speech [pay] man respect; em man talk to ask; man cleans.

[Translation] When you go through this process you can attend big gatherings with elders. When you speak, men will respect you and say, he is a man now – this kind of thing.

**Entering manhood**

The initiating ceremony is practiced and noted in my area to be very important because it would a make child into adulthood.

**Community acceptance**

If you no circumcised na yu marit, bat u man melkin funny long yu, bat yu nonap pilim gupi la long item and no reason.

[Translation] If you are not circumcised and you are married, then men will make fun of you, and you will not feel comfortable to walk around in public.

**Spiritual Beliefs**

Male circumcision is culturally practiced in Morobe Province at the age of 16 years. Going through the initiation ceremony the young person receives supernatural power from the elders.

#### Reason – Health

**Prevention of STI/HIV**

To prevent or reduce risk of getting infected with STI

To keep it clean so as to protect myself from STDs

**Personal Hygiene**

To prevent odours/ offensive smell

To keep my penis clean and healthy at all times

Skin stop dirty be pulpinside long skin so mi cutim to keep my penis clean [translation] where there is foreskin it will collect dirt under the foreskin, so I cut it to keep my penis clean

**Strong and Healthy**

Believing that it would become strong and healthy

I want to become a strong and healthy person

**Medical Reasons**

I was told to remove due to health reasons (penis tight by the foreskin)

My mum told me that it was for health reason. I did not urinate well when I was small so they remove my foreskin which I am happy they did

#### Reason – Sexual

**Obtain good sexual pleasure**

For sexual pleasure: to obtain good pleasure of having sex

**Prolong Ejaculation**

See you longaki na swei na men na use apnaa [long to] sex. [translation] Sex is for longer and sweeter and man does not ejaculate quickly

To prolong ejaculation that will satisfy me and my partner too which they express they are happy when having sex with me

**Sexual satisfaction to partner**

My women would feel happy to have sex. [translation] To give better satisfaction to women. Women will yell (with excitement).

*Not to give pleasure to women in order that they won’t forget me*

**For Erection**

You can keep 2 or 3 times [translation] you can have sex 2 or 3 times

Avoid weakness of the erect penis while having sex

**Penile Enlargement**

Taim yu atom skin na stik bigong yu bei skin, bat yu no maim olpamase bloo blood la long item b'i long item.

[translation] when you cut the foreskin from your penis you will remove the old blood and your penis will become big.

Taim yu atom skin na stik bigong yu bei skin, bat em Aemp b'long b'i long item b'i long item [translation] when you cut your foreskin your penis will become big and you can have sex with older women.

#### Reason – Biblical

**Positive Views**

God instructed that Jesus to be circumcised and because of that I did it as a believer

If Jesus can do it, He set an example so why not practising it

Bible encourages circumcision so why not practising MC as Christians

**Negative Views**

Supai God em wokim man wantaim skin faimin stap olsem [translation] If God created man with foreskin then just leave it alone.

Noken bapngism creation bilong God na atom skin maring nating [translation] Don’t spoil God’s creation by cutting the foreskin unnecessarily.
Influence from Others

- Peer Influence
  My friend recommended me to do so we can be looked up at just like other boys in the school

- Partners Influence
  My girl friend told me that she prefers circumcised men so I did it

- Parent's Decision
  My father and mother decided on that but I appreciate this decision as I think it is a clean idea

What do women think about male circumcision?

- What do women think are the good things about male circumcision?
- What do women think are the bad things about male circumcision?

And we asked about lots of other things too!

Results: Positives for women

8 major themes identified:
- Health
- Sexual pleasure
- Religion
- Cultural
- Masculinity
- Maturity
- Sense of happiness/satisfaction
- Sense of safety

Health and Sexual Pleasure

- Health
  Prevent cervical cancer and infections
  A women with partner who has a round cut has the low risk of developing cervix cancer
  Clean and Healthy
  Avoid smell and other infection that her husband will release during sex
  Prevention of STIs/HIV
  Em bai aburisim olim sem gonoria, sipol or ol a ropeola kom sik
  [translation] He will avoid contracting sickness like gonorrhoea, syphilis and other STIs

- Sexual Pleasure
  Sait bilong slip wantaim man bilong mi, em mi save pilim gut bikos, em nogat skin bilong kok na em save smooth tasol.
  [translation] In relation to having sex with my husband, I feel good because there is no foreskin and its just smooth

- Happiness and satisfaction
  She would not leave her husband and go having sex with other men because she would feel comfortable and more enjoyable because of the desires, feelings and pleasures

Masculinity, culture, religion

- Masculinity
  From what I heard from my girl friends that the boys from their village, like when they are circumcised they look healthy, they look strong, they look like fit and they look handsome.

- Culture
  The boys will lose those bad blood. Taim ol kusim dipela bar al grow healthy or strong. Em gupele long kastom sait.
  [translation] The boys will lose those bad blood, when they remove this they will grow healthy and strong. It is good for the culture.

- Religion
  Even Jesus himself was circumcised; we must always remember that

Results: Negatives for women

8 major themes identified:
- Men more sexually active/aroused
- Sex with many women
- Unsafe outside of health care setting
- Pain and healing
- Changes to penis
- Inserts and injections
- Risks: STIs, domestic violence and divorce
- Culture
Sexual Activity

-Men want more sexual activity
I heard from people that men who are circumcised easily get into sexual relationships, they feel sexually active at any time. He will want to sleep with his wife all the time and if there is no family planning they are likely to produce many children that are unplanned.

-Men want sex with many women
I think it might encourage the husband to have more sexual partners thus might easily contract the disease. Man will have uncontrollable penis because most of the time they will be erected and the sexual desire will be so high. This cause man to be unsatisfied with one woman and so will be looking for sexual partners/places to satisfy them even erecting penis.

Unsafe cutting, Pain and Healing

-Unsafe Cutting
Bleeding can occur if not cut well. For example, my cousin almost bled to death because his peers did not do a proper cut. He almost fainted because he lost a lot of blood. And we have to take him to the hospital.

-Pain and Healing
When they are doing circumcision on children, I do not like it because he is too young and the child will feel a lot of pain. Having a round cut is massive, and negative change is that it would take a long time to heal. Thus meaning that we won't have sex for a long period of time.

Changes to penis

-Changes from circumcision/cutting
Sometimes I feel that his penis are growing into an extra ordinary thing and I don't enjoy having sex with him. I think the penis would become smaller or decrease in size and the woman would not enjoy sex as she would.

Family and Culture

-Domestic Violence and Family Problems
Em bai laik slip wantaim meri bilong em ojepta taim, everyday em bai no nap rest, even though meri pilim les. still em bai go out na painim na yapai na causim femli problem. Sometimes he can force and beat you because he could not control himself.

-Culture
Circumcision is not common in other parts of PNG and women may not accept it in the beginning but educating and making awareness of the positive results can change all that.

Summary

-There is a great diversity of foreskin cutting and ‘Male Circumcision’ practices in Papua New Guinea reflecting the diversity of the country
-Most foreskin cutting in Papua New Guinea are longitudinal cuts performed during teenage years or early adulthood by a friend or family member
-There are a wide range of social, cultural and religious reasons for foreskin cutting in Papua New Guinea
-There was a wide variety and sometimes conflicting responses by women.
-Many women highlighted the health benefits and increased sexual pleasure if men are circumcised.
-Key negative responses included: men desiring more sex, unsafe circumcision practices, physical and emotional pain for women and negative change to expectations of women as sexual partners.
-Any potential male circumcision for HIV Prevention programs in Papua New Guinea need to take into account this wide range of traditional and contemporary penis cutting practices, the reasons these cuts are being done and perspectives from women.

Acknowledgements

- Provincial and Regional Student Leaders and Village/Community leaders from the 4 study site
- Study participants
- Pacific Adventist University
- Divine Word University
- James Cook University
- Porgera Joint Venture
- Higaturu Oil Palms
- NDOH/ADB HIV Prevention in Rural Enclaves Project
- PNGMR with University of Queensland and UNSW MC study team
- PNG National AIDS Council PAC 4 sites
- National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia