

AUSTRALASIAN HIV/AIDS CONFERENCE

“I WAS CUT UNDER THE PLANTATION PALMS”: TECHNIQUES AND LOCATIONS OF PENILE CUTTING IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

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‘Acceptability of Male Circumcision for HIV Prevention in PNG’ study.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Papua New Guinea is a diverse country with a population of 6.8 million people speaking more than 800 languages. PNG has more than 90% of all reported cases of HIV in Oceania. There are a plethora of penile cutting styles, penile cutting techniques and penile cutting locations in Papua New Guinea.

Methods: Structured questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions were utilised to enquire about locations and techniques of male circumcision, penile cutting and/or penile modification. This occurred across four locations where people from across the country gather to study and/or work (two university campuses in large urban centres, a remote mountain gold mine and coastal oil palm plantation). The questionnaire included specific questions for men about where penile cutting occurred and what techniques were used to cut the foreskin.

Results: 57% of the 864 male study participants reported having some form of penile cut. The majority have some form of longitudinal cut of the foreskin performed outside the medical system. Many men describe having their foreskin cut in or near a village by a male relative, friend or village expert and often linked to initiation ceremonies. Men who had attended boarding school or university reported having their foreskin cut while at school or university. Tools used include bamboo, razor blades, scalpel blades and large craft needles with strips of rubber tyre or fishing line. Many young men sourced scalpel blades, pain relief and antibiotic medication from medical clinics

(either directly or via friends or relatives) and presented these to foreskin cutters.

Conclusion: Any potential male circumcision for HIV Prevention programs in Papua New Guinea need to take into account the range of traditional and contemporary penile cutting practices.

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