



circumcision

a lifetime of medical benefits



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Currently over 46 million people are infected with the HIV virus worldwide, the majority in sub-Saharan Africa , and 3 million deaths are expected this year alone. Tens of millions have already died. In the past 15 years many published studies have shown that circumcision helps protect against HIV infection, by eliminating the specialized receptor cells in the foreskin that bind to the virus. A recent statement from the U.S Agency for International Development (USAID) referred to "an incredible preponderance of evidence " of the protective effect of circumcision . But would circumcision be acceptable to Africans as an intervention against HIV?

Two recent surveys, one in Botswana and the other in South Africa , examined the question.Both countries have a high prevalence of HIV. The South African study took place in the Westonaria area where most of the men were uncircumcised. Of 374 uncircumcised men 70% stated that they would want to be circumcised if the procedure were proved to protect against sexually transmitted diseases. It was concluded that circumcision was perceived positively in this area where the level of circumcision is low.

In the Botswana survey 605 men and women (52% men) were interviewed and 68% stated that they would definitely or probably circumcise a male child, if circumcision were offered free of charge in a hospital setting. Of 238 uncircumcised men, 145 (61%) said they would agree to circumcision under the same circumstances.The investigators felt that the option for safe circumcision should be made available to parents in Botswana , since the procedure seems to be highly acceptable.

Why aren't medical and diplomatic agencies encouraging the use of circumcision as an intervention against the devastating HIV epidemic in view of the evidence of benefit and the acceptability by the people at risk

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