

ORIGINAL RESEARCH ARTICLE

Female Genital Mutilation: Potential for HIV Transmission in sub-Saharan Africa and Prospect for Epidemiologic Investigation and Intervention

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Abstract

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) which involves alteration of the female genitalia for non-medical grounds is prevalent in Sub-Saharan Africa, associated with long-term genitourinary complications, and possible HIV transmission. This mini-review aims to examine FGM and the possibility of HIV transmission through this procedure. We performed an electronic search using Medline for articles published between 1966 to 2006 for evidence of FGM practice, its complications, and the nexus between this procedure and HIV sero-positivity. The results indicate ongoing FGM practice, albeit prevalence reduction, due probably to the increasing knowledge of the consequences of FGM as a result of non-sterile techniques. Secondly, the complications of FGM are well established which include Genitourinary disorders. Further, while data is limited on HIV transmission via FGM, there is biologic plausibility in suggesting that FGM may be associated with increasing prevalence of HIV in sub-Saharan Africa. This paper recommends further studies in order to assess the association between FGM and HIV transmission.

Keywords: *Female genital mutilation, HIV transmission, sub-Saharan Africa, HIV risk factors*

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