Can Female Genital Mutilation Victims Benefit From Corrective Surgery: To Regain Sexual Pleasure And Be “Whole” Once Again?

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BACKGROUND
Female Genital Mutilation is the removal or cutting of the external female genitalia, all procedures including partial and/or the entirety or other injury to the female genital organs for traditional or non-medical reasons. (World Health Organization, WHO, 1997).

Key Facts
- Currently an estimated at 100 to 140 million girls & women worldwide are living with consequences of FGM
- An estimated 92 million girls in Africa age 10 and above are victims of FGM
- Girls between infancy & 15 are at greatest risk

There are four types of FGM
Type I: Partial or total removal of the clitoris &/or prepuce (clitoridectomy).
Type II: Partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora; with or without excision of the labia majora (excision).
Type III: Narrowing of the vaginal orifice with creation of a covering seal by cutting & appositioning the labia minora &/or the labia majora.
Type IV: All other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes.

Prevalence

Consequences

What are the Consequences of FGM?

Immediate complications:
- Severe pain & bleeding
- Hemorrhage
- Shock
- Acute Urine Retention
- Infections
- Ulceration of genital region
- Injury to adjacent tissue
- Psychological and psychosexual trauma

Long Term Complications:
- Psychological and psychosexual trauma
- Marital problems
- Childbirth complication
- Infertility
- Difficulties with Menstruation
- Vaginal Fistulae
- Chronic pelvic infections

Clitoral Repair Surgery

- Restores Pleasure
- Restores body

According to Dr. Marcie Bowers, (2010), "The restoration [of sexual pleasure] is possible because the entire clitoris is sensory, not just the amputated portion," Bowers explained. "Sensation is robbed [through FGM] because the amputated portion retracts back and then gets covered by scar tissue. The clitoris is foreshortened by FGM but it isn’t removed – not even a majority of it. The restoration surgery exposes the clitoral stump. Then, with plastic surgery techniques, we are able to bring the exposed portion to the surface, suture it there and even create new labia minora in many cases by utilizing the available surrounding skin. The exposed sensory portion, free of overlying skin and scar tissue, is then to function.”

RESULTS

The consequences associated with FGM were thought to be irreversible; however a simple surgical procedure developed by Franki Dr. Pierre Foldes, “offers hope for victims of FGM” Dr. Foldes has been working with victims of FGM for approximately 30 years and has operated on an estimated 3000 women in France (Olivia Stumes for CNN, 2008).

Moreover, there have been an “increasing number of women who have undergone genital mutilation are immigrating to the U.S.” As professionals learn to identify the physical facets of female genital mutilation it is imperative to understand its psychological and emotional effects as well (Sebold, 2005).

For this purpose, Chirona, a non-profit organization that offers surgery to women that increase the damage caused by FGM sponsored Dr. Marci Bowers to be trained directly under Dr. Pierre Foldes and on March 27, 2009, what Colinda states, Dr. Marcie Bowers performed the first clitoral repair surgeries ever performed in the United States, successfully restoring clitoral functioning and the capacity for physical pleasure to 3 FGM victims, referred by CLITORAID.

However, surgery is not enough. Research by Bending A. & Mentu S., (2007) proves that victims of FGM reveal a higher prevalence of posttraumatic stress (PTSD) 30-4% and other psychiatric syndromes 47.95% than uncuturized women. "Many FGM victims have never experienced pleasure through clitoral stimulation” (CLITORAID, 2010), therapy is equally important in making a mind body connection.

CONCLUSIONS

Clitoral mutilation in the name of cultural traditions, religion and/or social factors does not protect women and/or girls from experiencing traumatic psychological and physical damage. Through corrective surgery, pre and post therapy, counseling, and sexual education women victims of FGM can regain sexual pleasure providing them a chance to be “Whole” once again.

For this reason, Female Genital Mutilation victims can benefit from corrective surgery. According to, leading expert in sexual trauma Larry Ashley, “it is as important to treat the psychological damage done to FGM victims as it is to repair the physical damage.” Therefore, it is essential that a team of community providers be assembled and trained to create pre and post counseling follow-up to all surgical outcomes. With this said, “It is especially important, since it will help the woman accept and maximize her new capacity for physical pleasure” with the aid of clitoral stimulation and FGM survivors can be treated successfully.

Dr. Marcie Bowers recently performed surgeries at her Colorado clinic, Dr. Marci Bowers, and the newly presented information, creates a necessity for further studies to be conducted on the emotional and psychological effects of FGM victims post-surgery.

Many thanks to the Dr. Foldes, for his work in the development of corrective surgery and the work of Chirona, Dr. Marcia Bowers, Larry Ashley, and Betty Dodson for their commitment in helping FGM victims connect mind and body for total healing to regain sexual pleasure and be “Whole” once again.

The purpose for this research is to promote community and international awareness. If you are interested in learning more or know someone who can benefit from this information, please refer to Chirona website at Chirona.org

BIBLIOGRAPHY


