

Prepuce Restoration Seekers: Psychiatric Aspects

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A new subgroup of patients within the homosexual community has been identified who are characterized by preoccupation with their absent foreskins. They associate their circumcised status with a sense of incompleteness, anger over a lack of choice, and their sense of masculinity. Four patients who sought surgical reconstruction are reported. None were Jewish or psychotic. All tolerated surgery well. Preliminary etiologic hypotheses are advanced, emphasizing psychodynamic and imprinting possibilities.

KEY WORDS: circumcision; uncircumcision; foreskin; homosexuality; prepuce reconstruction.

INTRODUCTION

A distinct subgroup within the homosexual community characterized by an erotic attachment to and/or preoccupation with the foreskin has recently come to our attention. This resulted when circumcised members of this subgroup requested surgical reconstruction of their foreskins. The existence of three separate organizations and publications

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devoted to the concerns of these individuals demonstrates that these individuals represent an authentic, definable group.

The organizations are involved in political action such as lobbying against neonatal circumcision, information dispensing, and social and cultural activities. The publications include a quarterly newsletter, a membership directory, and a pornographic magazine. One of the organizations reports 1200 members, 80% homosexual, 10% bisexual, and 10% heterosexual, with 65% uncircumcised, 30% circumcised, and 5% "partially" circumcised. Age range is primarily young adult to early middle age with every state and several foreign countries represented (U.S.A. Newsletter, 1976). Our patients and the newsletter suggest that many of these individuals have been in touch with physicians in an attempt to obtain reconstruction. A few have obtained surgical reconstructions of their foreskins, although most report hostile, amused, or anxious responses from physicians (U.S.A. Newsletter, 1974).

Despite this evidence of prior contact with physicians, there are no reports in the literature describing these patients. Prior surgical reports have emphasized techniques applied to congenital deformities, traumatic injury, and transsexuals (Goldin, 1975; DeSouza, 1976; Manchanda *et al.*, 1967; Noe *et al.*, 1974). Psychiatric descriptions of patients who have sought "uncircumcision" have emphasized Jews seeking to disguise their identities during times of political and cultural crises (Tushnet, 1965; Schneider, 1976; Levin, 1976). There is one report describing the surgical technique used to reconstruct the foreskin of a patient who sought this for psychological reasons and is reported to have recovered from his emotional discomfort following surgery (Penn, 1963). Another patient, probably psychotic, killed his surgeon following a similar procedure.⁶ Most of our colleagues assumed that these patients must be psychotic when we initially discussed the subject. None of our patients has been Jewish or psychotic, nor has any had preputial or penile disease or trauma. None bear any resemblance to transsexuals. These patients have a personally motivated obsession to obtain a new foreskin, an obsession sufficiently strong that these patients are willing to undergo an acknowledged experimental procedure of uncertain outcome bearing risk of permanent disfigurement.

CASE REPORTS

Case # 1

Mr. A is a successful 36-year-old school teacher from a large southwestern city. When he first presented he was so guarded and hostile

⁶This rumor was confirmed by the Duke University Information Service.