

# Press release



## **‘Violation of physical integrity’**

### **Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) to discourage non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors**

Utrecht, 27 May 2010 – **The official standpoint of KNMG and other related medical/scientific organisations is that non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors is a violation of children’s rights to autonomy and physical integrity. KNMG is urging a strong policy of deterrence.**

The reason for the adoption of an official standpoint regarding this matter is the increasing emphasis on the protection of children’s rights. Contrary to popular belief, circumcision can also cause complications – bleeding, infection, urethral stricture and panic attacks are particularly common. Full or partial penile amputations have also been reported as a consequence of complications.

KNMG is calling upon doctors to actively and insistently inform parents who are considering the procedure of the absence of medical benefits and the danger of complications. “The rule is: do not operate on healthy children”, says Arie Nieuwenhuijzen Kruseman, chairman of the KNMG. “It is an unfortunate fact that any surgical procedure can cause complications. Doctors accept this to a certain extent because there are medical reasons for the procedure. However, no complications can be justified that occur as the result of an operation that is medically unnecessary.”

#### **Children’s rights**

KNMG regards the non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors as a violation of physical integrity, a constitutional right that protects individuals against unwanted internal or external physical modifications. According to the KNMG, minors should only be subjected to medical procedures in the event of illness or abnormalities, or if a convincing case can be made that the procedure is in the interests of the child (such as vaccination).

#### **Dialogue**

The KNMG sees good reasons for the statutory prohibition of non-therapeutic circumcision of male minors, but fears that the procedure will then be driven underground, leading to an increase in the number of complications.

The Medical Association is aware that the practice of circumcision of male minors has deep religious, symbolic and cultural meaning. The KNMG respects this, and is calling for dialogue among medical associations, experts and the relevant religious groups.

#### **Wide support**

The following medical and scientific organisations officially support the standpoint of the KNMG: the Dutch Urological Association (*Nederlandse Vereniging voor Urologie*), the Dutch College of General Practitioners (*Het Nederlands Huisartsengenootschap*), the Dutch Paediatric

Surgery Association (*Nederlandse Vereniging voor Kinderchirurgie*), the Dutch Plastic Surgery Association (*Nederlandse Vereniging voor Plastische Chirurgie*), the Association of Surgeons of the Netherlands (*Nederlandse Vereniging voor Heelkunde*) and the Dutch Paediatric Association (*Nederlandse Vereniging voor Kindergeneeskunde*).

A survey among a representative sample of KNMG members recently showed that individual doctors widely support the above standpoint.

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**Note to editorial staff**

The complete standpoint of the KNMG, including a background study, the results of the members' poll and a preamble, are available in English at [www.knmg.nl/jongensbesnijdenis](http://www.knmg.nl/jongensbesnijdenis).

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The Royal Dutch Medical Association (KNMG) is the professional organization that represents more than 46.000 physicians and students in the Netherlands. The KNMG is the federation of medical practitioners' professional associations: the National Association of salaried Doctors (LAD), the National Association of General Practitioners (LHV), the Dutch Association for occupational Health (NVAB), the Dutch Association of Insurance Medicine (NVVG), the Dutch Order of Medical Specialists (Orde) and Elderly care physicians (Verenso). [www.knmg.nl](http://www.knmg.nl)