

QUESTIONNAIRE: FEMALE GENITAL CIRCUMCISION (FGC)

Hypothesis / aims of study

Female Genital Circumcision (FGC) is still a big problem in various regions of Africa. Long-term health problems after FGC may be for example: long voiding time, recurrent infection, extra-urethral urinary incontinence as well as faecal incontinence due to fistulae, dysmenorrhoea, dayspareunia, dysuria and pelvic pain.^(1,2,3) Because of migration FGC poses a problem in German-speaking countries too and doctors are increasingly confronted with patients who have undergone FGC.⁽³⁾ There aren't any valid data about the frequency of long-term medical consequences after female genital circumcision in German-speaking countries and there is no suitable questionnaire. The aim of this study is to compile a questionnaire which quantitatively measures the frequency of health problems. In addition to this, the authors of this study have set themselves the goal to translate the questionnaire into four different languages and to validate the different versions subsequently. The questionnaire is in German and it was translated into English, French and Arabic. These languages are widely used in the African countries which are most afflicted by FGC.

Study design, materials and methods

The first step was to draw up the German questionnaire. Its 15 questions inquire about the state of health of the women. Two more questions ask about if and how women were circumcised. Furthermore, there are questions referring to sexual intercourse, pregnancy, delivery and age. The German questionnaire was validated according to the current guidelines for validation. This includes a pilot testing of about 15 people. Thereafter the questionnaire was translated into English, French and Arabic according to the current validation-guidelines. The validation-guidelines used are in accordance with the EORCT group for research into Quality of Life and contains - among other things - forward- and backward translation as well as pilot-testing.

Results

The questions were understood by everyone polled. As a rule it takes 10 minutes to read through the information sheet and to fill in the questionnaire. None of the test persons needed help or additional explanations to fill in the questionnaire. The questionnaire has been also used with some circumcised women.

Interpretation of results

The questionnaire is well-suited to find out about the frequency of common medical complications after female genital circumcision. All of the 3 translations are as close to the original version as possible.

Concluding message

This questionnaire lays the foundation for detailed research concerning FGC and its health consequences. The questionnaire in different languages ensures that women who were circumcised can understand it as for most of those female immigrants to Europe come from Africa. Further clinical studies and practical application of the questionnaire will have to follow.

References

1. LIGHTFOOD-KLEIN, Hanny (1992): Das grausame Ritual. Sexuelle Verstümmelung afrikanischer Frauen. Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Verlag.
2. LIGHTFOOT-KLEIN, Hanny (2003): Der Beschneidungsskandal. Berlin: Orlanda Frauenverlag GmbH.
3. MAIER, Christina (2003): Echo des Schweigens. Stimmen der Betroffenheit zur Genitalverstümmelung bei afrikanischen Immigrantinnen in Wien. Ethnologische Studie. Maria Enzersdorf: Edition Roesner.

Specify source of funding or grant	NONE
Is this a clinical trial?	No
What were the subjects in the study?	HUMAN
Was this study approved by an ethics committee?	Yes
Specify Name of Ethics Committee	Ethik-Kommission der Medizinischen Universität Wien und des allgemeinen Krankenhauses der Stadt Wien (Ethics Committee of the medical university of Vienna and of the general hospital of Vienna)
Was the Declaration of Helsinki followed?	Yes
Was informed consent obtained from the patients?	Yes