

**Subject:** FW: Correspondence from Senator Coburn

From: Senator\_Coburn@coburn.senate.gov <Senator\_Coburn@coburn.senate.gov>  
Subject: Correspondence from Senator Coburn  
To: [REDACTED]  
Date: Friday, February 27, 2009, 8:37 AM

February 27, 2009

Mrs. Kristi Rath

[REDACTED]  
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma [REDACTED]

Dear Mrs. Rath,

Thank you for contacting me regarding issues related to circumcision. I appreciate hearing from you and apologize for the delayed response.

As a practicing physician with a specialty in obstetrics, I know firsthand the medical issues related to circumcision. The World Health Organization estimates that 70 percent of American males are circumcised. Many families choose to perform neonatal circumcision because of the demonstrated medical benefits of the procedure. You are right, however, that there are both potential benefits and risks to the procedure, which is why I firmly believe that parents should have the responsibility of making the best decision possible for their children.

There are a number of potential medical benefits for circumcision. In addition to making proper hygiene easier for young males, the procedure has also shown to decrease the risk of urinary tract infections (UTI). Severe infections early in life can lead to kidney problems late in life, and a meta-analysis of 12 studies of over 400,000 children determined that circumcision was associated with a significantly reduced risk of UTI. Circumcision has also been shown to prevent other penile problems such as phimosis (when the foreskin will not retract), which can also lead to inflammation of the head of the penis, and decreases the risk of penile cancer.

Circumcision has also been shown to reduce the risk of sexually-transmitted diseases. Three controlled studies in Africa demonstrated that circumcision reduced vaginal-to-penile transmission of the HIV virus by 60%, 53%, and 51%, respectively. WHO and the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) have stated that male circumcision is an efficacious intervention for HIV prevention when carried out by well trained medical professionals.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) has stated, "Existing scientific evidence demonstrates potential medical benefits of newborn male circumcision. In the case of circumcision, in which there are potential benefits and risks, yet the procedure is not essential to the child's current well-being, parents should determine what is in the best interest of the child." The American Medical Association has expressed support for the AAP policy statement, and almost every other medical association in the United States has expressed similar views.

As a physician, I believe that it is important to inform my patients of both these medical benefits and risks. The decision, however, whether made for medical or religious reasons, rests with the child's parents. Parents are expected-and obligated-to make the best medical decisions for their children, based on sound advice from their doctors. Rather than pursue a federal prohibition with significant medical, religious, and parental authority concerns, I believe we should seek to provide individuals with the necessary scientific information.

I appreciate you taking the time to express your views on this matter. Thank you again for contacting me, and please stay in touch.

Sincerely, **A**

Tom A. Coburn, M.D.  
United States Senator

TC: egf