



State of New Jersey
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SENIOR SERVICES
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JON S. CORZINE
Governor

www.nj.gov/health

FRED M. JACOBS, M.D., J.D.
Commissioner

May 25, 2006

Mr. John W. Soemer

Flanders, NJ

Dear Mr. Soemer:

Your letter to Governor Corzine concerning the controversial issue of male genital mutilation has been referred to me for reply.

Female circumcision or genital mutilation does not have a medically beneficial purpose. For this reason, it is essential that there be laws to protect females from these procedures in spite of cultural or religious practices.

Male circumcision has been studied and medical benefits of the procedure have been identified. There are also medical conditions which require removal of the foreskin from the penis. Over the past several years, some of the conclusions of these studies have been questioned and there continue to be studies surrounding the issue. While the medical societies do not endorse routine male circumcision of neonates, they do not strictly prohibit it either. The published guidelines place the risk/benefit discussion of this procedure between the medical practitioner and the parent. Also, male circumcision has been a major tenet of two major world religions, Judaism and Islam for thousands of years. The State and US Constitutions supports the rights of people to practice their faith within current secular law.

Circumcision of the male is a surgical procedure and therefore requires informed consent within a medical setting. This means that before any circumcision can be performed in a health care facility in New Jersey, the individual or the parent, in the case of a child, must be informed of the risks and benefits of the procedure and this individual must sign a consent form.

Thank you for your continued interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eddy A. Bresnitz".

Eddy A. Bresnitz, M.D., M.S.
Deputy Commissioner/State Epidemiologist