Female Genital Mutilation

Information Sheet

FGM is practiced as a cultural ritual in 28 African countries as well as in parts of the Middle East and Asia. However, FGM is also recognised internationally as a violation of Human Rights and is illegal in the United Kingdom under the Female Genital Mutilation Act 2003.

What is FGM?

The World Health organisation defines female genital mutilation (FGM) as ‘all procedures involving partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.’

Categories of FGM

- **Clitoridectomy**: partial or total removal of the clitoris, and in very rare cases, only the prepuce.
- **Excision**: partial or total removal of the clitoris and the labia minora, with or without excision of the labia majora.
- **Infibulation**: narrowing of the vaginal opening through the creation of a covering seal. The seal is formed by cutting and repositioning the inner, or out, labia, with or without removal of the clitoris.
- **Other**: all other harmful procedures to the female genitalia for non-medical purposes.

Consequences of FGM

**Short-term**: severe pain, emotional and psychological shock, haemorrhage, wound infections, urinary retention, injury to adjacent tissues, fracture of dislocation as a result of restraint, damage to other organs.

**Long-term**: chronic vaginal and pelvic infections, difficulties with menstruation, difficulties in passing urine and chronic urine infections, renal impairment and possible renal failure, damage to the reproductive system including infertility, infibulation cysts, neuromas and keloid scar formation, complications in pregnancy and delay in the second stage of child birth, pain during sex and lack of pleasurable sensation, psychological damage, increased risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

Who to contact

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