



Doctors Opposing Circumcision

2040 Westlake Ave., N., #420, Seattle, Washington, USA 98109

Tel +1. 206. 465. 6636



"The International members of D.O.C. advocate genital integrity for the health and well-being of all children everywhere."

28 January 2021

Ambassador Deborah L. Birx
U. S. Global AIDS Coordinator & U. S. Special Representative for Global Health
The United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)
U. S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Re: Racist nature of the VMMC circumcision program in sub-Saharan Africa.

Dear Dr. Birx:

George C. Denniston, MD, MPH, the president and founder of Doctors Opposing Circumcision wrote a letter to you on June 29, 2020, in which he detailed the harm that male circumcision causes and its lack of effectiveness in preventing HIV infection. In his letter, he recommended that the VMMC circumcision program be suspended.¹ Unfortunately, it appears that you have taken no action on this recommendation, although more than six months has elapsed.

However, we remain deeply concerned (as our organization's name implies) that the campaign to circumcise all of sub-Saharan Africa as an HIV/AIDS panacea was a terrible mistake, if well-intentioned at its outset. It was rife with demonstrable bioethical and scientific shortcomings initially, and has not improved with age.

An article by Fish *et al.*, published on 9 September 2020, soon after Dr. Denniston's letter, details further disheartening information about PEPFAR's circumcision program. Fish *et al.* published an article about the PEPFAR circumcision program in July 2020.² The article provides additional information beyond Dr. Denniston's letter regarding:

- The problems that Africans continue to experience with the VMMC program, including coercion.
- The inherent racism in the VMMC program as the 'white man's medicine.'
- The neocolonialism inherent in the VMMC program.
- Failure to acknowledge inherent protections in the human foreskin against viral infections.

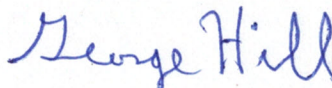
¹ A copy of Dr. Denniston's letter is enclosed for your information.

² A new Tuskegee? Unethical human experimentation and Western neocolonialism in the mass circumcision of African men. Max Fish | Arianne Shahvisi | Tatenda Gwaambuka | Godfrey B. Tangwa | Daniel Ncayiyana | Brian D. Earp. *Developing World Bioeth.* 2020;00:1–16. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/dewb.12285>

We would like to give you an opportunity to take a leadership position and act to end this racist program. As Fish *et al.* point out, the circumcision of boys under age 15 has already been stopped, thankfully. Now it is time to retire the rest of VMMC. Please be assured that we do not plan to let this important matter rest. We fear that history will judge that white supporters of this outmoded, ill-conceived program were outright racists.

The Fish paper gives us the resources and encouragement to press onward, which we intend to do. We hope that we can count on your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely yours,



George Hill

Vice-president for Bioethics and Medical Science.

...on behalf of the Board Members and Advisors of Doctors Opposing Circumcision:

George C. Denniston, MD, MPH, President
Mark D. Reiss, MD, Executive Vice-President
John V. Geisheker, JD, LL.M Executive Director and General Counsel.
Morris L. Sorrells, MD, Pediatric consultant
Andrew R. Biles, Jr, MD, Pediatric consultant
John W. Travis, MD, MPH, Infant Wellness
Mat Masem, MD, Professor of Medicine,
Michelle Storms, MD, Family Medicine
Gabriel Symonds, MB, GP consultant
Sarah E. Strandjord, MD, Pediatric consultant
James Snyder, MD, Urology consultant
Adrienne Carmack, MD, Urology consultant
Zenas Baer, JD, Legal consultant
Michaelle M. Wetteland, RN, MMA, Nursing
Amanda M. Morse, MPH, Maternal & child health
Gillian Longley, RN, BSN, MSS, Neonatal ICU
Janet Heimlich, The Child-Friendly Faith Project

Enclosures (2)