

Fewer STDs among circumcised

by Graham Worrall

CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND |

Circumcision halves the risk of acquiring a sexually transmitted disease (STD) in men ages 20 to 25 years, according to a longitudinal study recently completed here.

Circumcision status and rates of STDs were compared among 520 men who had been followed from birth as part of the Christchurch Health and Development Study. The research team, lead by Dr. David Fergusson of the Christchurch School of Medicine and Health Sciences, found uncircumcised men were 2.7 times more likely to acquire an STD than circumcised men. When the results were further adjusted to take into account the frequency of unprotected sex and number of partners, the link was even stronger, with uncircumcised men having 3.2 times the rate of STDs.

“If all the young men in this cohort had been circumcised,” said Dr. Fergusson, “we estimated the overall rate of (STDs) would have been reduced by 48%.”

Half of the reported cases were chlamydia, which suggests circumcision has a protective effect against this infection.

“The evidence for a protective effect is so far inconclusive and further research work needs to be done,” Dr. Fergusson said.

Other STDs reported by the men were genital warts, gonorrhea and non-specific urethritis.

“Circumcision has the potential to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infection acquisitions and transmission by up to one half, which suggests a substantial benefit from routine neonatal circumcision,” he said.