



Media Release

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No to Female Genital Mutilation

The Royal Women's Hospital has criticised a proposal to amend US laws to allow a form of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) on newborn girls in that country.

The American Academy of Pediatrics has suggested that pediatricians be permitted to offer a ritual 'nick' of girls' genitalia, as a compromise to appease the cultural needs of their immigrant clients.

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists will discuss the US proposal at a meeting in June.

All forms of FGM, sometimes called 'cutting' or female circumcision, are currently illegal in many countries, including the US and Australia.

"It is outrageous that a leading developed nation such as the United States is proposing to 'westernise' the mutilation of young girls," said the Chief Executive of the Women's, Dale Fisher. "FGM, in any form, is simply unacceptable."

The Women's is part of a national initiative – the Family and Reproductive Rights Education Program (FARREP) – which aims to educate the community about FGM, and help eradicate the practice. "Through FARREP, we are working to educate the community that FGM in any form is unacceptable, and it has no medical value. We will not walk away from our responsibilities on this," Ms Fisher said.

FARREP is a free service that provides health information and support for women and their families from cultures in which female circumcision is sometimes practiced.

FARREP workers at the Women's coordinate doctors, nurses and social support during antenatal care, childbirth and afterward, for women affected by FGM.

FARREP at the Women's is part of the hospital's commitment to providing high quality care to women from a diverse range of cultural backgrounds, and which responds to their individual needs and circumstances. FARREP workers at the Women's have not encountered any women who have experienced FGM in Australia, and all cases of FGM seen by FARREP workers have been migrant women who have experienced the practice in their country of origin.

For more information, contact Robyn Anns, Media Manager, the Royal Women's Hospital, on 03 8345 2953 or 0419 128 400.