Reproductive health matters addresses issues related to cosmetic surgery, body image and sexuality

EurekAlert

Amsterdam, 11 June 2010 - Elsevier announced today the publication of the May 2010 issue of *Reproductive Health Matters*, which brings to light polemic issues related to cosmetic surgery, body image and sexuality. The issue explores the lack of proper information about the risks of complications and failure rate of many of these procedures. It also examines the controversy generated by the use of available resources, including skilled surgeons, for such procedures, when essential health and medical care are subject to serious restrictions in both developed and developing countries.

Even though cosmetic surgery is not a new phenomenon, studies point out that there has been a seismic shift in the past 10-15 years in what is considered possible and desirable to change in the bodies we are born with. This "body-changing culture" is becoming pervasive and, nowadays, it includes changes to most parts of the body, especially to the most intimate ones, such as the genitalia. The journal reveals that the procedures used to cosmetically modify female external genitalia are exactly the same as those employed in female genital mutilation (FGM). Whereas there is legislation in both Europe and Africa against FGM, there is none against female genital cosmetic surgery.

This edition also describes the serious complications that could arise from some of these procedures, and how much additional surgery they can lead to. Moreover, it casts doubt on whether this type of surgery actually "works". That is, on how long the beautifying effects actually last, and whether people's lives are in fact changed for the better after the procedure. While cosmetic surgery may liberate some from negative preoccupations with their appearance, it may also fuel fears among young and, otherwise vulnerable women - that their perfectly normal breasts and genitals do not live up to current fashion, or that they are abnormal and need surgical intervention.

The journal points out the lack of clarity on whether women are being given sufficient information about the risks and the benefits of cosmetic surgery. This last issue raises questions about the extent of informed consent and the ways all these practices should be regulated to protect patients.

Articles include:

- Genitals and ethnicity: the politics of genital modifications
- The experience and responses of Swedish health professionals to patients requesting virginity restoration (hymen repair)

- A poor prognosis for autonomy: self-regulated cosmetic surgery in the United Kingdom
- On norms and bodies: findings from field research on cosmetic surgery in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
- Make me beautiful
- "Reasonably safe": women, breasts and informed consent

Articles in this journal issue focus on Australia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, India, Iran, Netherlands, South Africa, Sweden UK and USA.

SOURCE [1]

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http://www.mdtmag.com/news/2010/06/reproductive-health-matters-addresses-issues-related-cosmetic-surgery-body-image-and-sexuality

Links:
[1] http://www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2010-06/e-rhm061110.php