

Global Health Day

Economic Analysis of Female Genital Mutilation in the United States: Tangible and Intangible Costs

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Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is defined by the WHO as "all procedures involving partial or total removal of the female external genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons". This practice exists on a continuum of severity and has often been linked to ancient empires in regions of modern-day Northern Africa and the Middle East. However, FGM persists as a problem today, with over 200 million cases worldwide and over 500,000 within the U.S. FGM literature has advanced in recent years with more reliable prevalence and incidence data, as well as increased understanding of the wide spectrum of morbidity and mortality experienced by these women and children. The aim of this project is to perform an economic analysis to develop an understanding of the financial costs to the individual and in aggregate of FGM within Illinois in the United States.

Tangible and intangible costs will be explored. Tangible costs include medical costs, loss of productivity, and morbidity/mortality secondary to physical health outcomes (obstetric, urologic, infectious, and/or functional complications), and mental health outcomes (depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress, and/or motivational alterations). Intangible costs refer to the immeasurable psychological pain and suffering itself that these individuals face in the setting of stigmatization and external mutilation.

In an attempt to address, minimize, and abandon the practice of FGM, this project will bring light to the economic burden of FGM within Illinois. In addition to a moral obligation to prioritize the health and safety of young girls and other vulnerable populations, we hope to demonstrate how it is economically advantageous to minimize and abandon all forms of FGM.

This research was presented as part of Northwestern University Institute for Global Health's Annual Global Health Day on Friday, December 4th, 2020.