Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) surveillance in under 16 years olds in the UK and Ireland

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INTRODUCTION

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a tradition mostly practiced in Africa, South East Asia and the Middle East and almost always carried out on children. WHO defines it as “procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons”.

Types of FGM involve cutting +/- removal of tissue e.g. the clitoris, +/- sealing the vaginal opening. Type 4 a small prick or cut predominates in Southeast Asia. 15% of FGM globally is type 3 when the vagina is sealed ‘closed’ to leave a small opening with all the associated long-term complications.

FGM is illegal in the UK and since 2003 illegal to take a child out of the country for the purpose of FGM. There are few dedicated clinics for FGM, and there are concerns from the Department of Health and Home office that doctors and other health practitioners are not reporting cases they see.

CASE DEFINITION

A new presentation of any child aged under 16 (i.e. up to 15 years 11 months), not already known to have FGM who was:
- Seen because of suspected or known FGM (for example referrals from social care) OR
- Seen for another condition and FGM is suspected following assessment OR
- Has a genital piercing OR
- Has had female cosmetic genital surgery including labiaplasty.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What is the incidence of childhood FGM presenting to doctors in the UK?
- What are the reasons for referral, and demographics associated with FGM?
- What are the clinical presentations, medical symptoms, examination findings and clinical management?

This British Paediatric Surveillance Unit study aims to:
- Identify the number of children diagnosed with FGM in the UK and Ireland
- Collect information about how it presents in children
- How it is treated
- Make recommendations for service delivery

METHODS

- From 1st November 2015, paediatricians in the UK were contacted to report any child up to the age of 16 presenting with FGM (as per case definition)
- Following notification the reporting paediatricians were sent a clinical questionnaire to complete and return to the study team for analysis
- The data collection period will end in November 2017

1ST YEAR RESULTS

Age FGM performed
- In the first year of data collection FGM was not performed on children over 10 years old

Country where FGM was performed and Type
- Type 1: 5 (13%)
- Type 2: 15 (38%)
- Type 3: 10 (26%)
- Type 4: 6 (15%)
- 3 not examined

CONCLUSIONS

- Geographical distribution is unexpected as some large inner cities where there high numbers of from practising communities are not represented e.g. Manchester and Liverpool
- Children with Type 3 were from East Africa or the Gambia
- There were a smaller proportion of Type 4 (15%) than reported in the London case series (52%) (1)