



## Female Genital Mutilation, “vacation cutting” and the travel medicine consultation



Jane Chiodini

Clapham Road Surgery, Bedford, UK

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Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a global issue and the World Health Organization reports in their factsheet of February 2017 that more than 200 million girls and women alive today have been cut in 30 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia where FGM is concentrated. FGM is mostly carried out on young girls between infancy and age 15.

The travel consultation offers an ideal opportunity to identify a situation where a child may be taken abroad for the purpose of FGM. Whilst FGM is mentioned in the Immigrant and Refugee Health section of the CDC website, I could find no reference in the travel section nor in the latest CDC Yellow Book 2018. There was however a section in the U.S Passports and International Travel site at <https://travel.state.gov/content/passports/en/go/Women.html> where it states It is a federal crime to perform FGM/C in the United States on any minor younger than 18 years old, punishable by fines or up to five years in prison, or both. It is also a criminal offense to knowingly take a girl younger than 18 years old outside of the United States for the purpose of performing FGM/C (so-called “vacation cutting”).

The Australian Government provides general information for travel and FGM at <http://smartraveller.gov.au/guide/all-travellers/laws/pages/female-genital-mutilation.aspx>.

For Canada, while there are news reports of practitioners of FGM travelling to Canada and information from the Canadian Paediatric Society at <http://www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/screening/fgm> again I could find nothing specifically travel medicine related.

In the UK, the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) together with specialists from the Department of Health (DH) and the Faculty of Travel Medicine of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow (RCPSG) and some independent travel medicine practitioners worked on a FGM guidance document specifically for travel health services. The publication is endorsed by the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC), Health Protection Scotland and the RCPSG. FGM is illegal in the UK and in 2015, the legislation was strengthened in England and Wales by the Serious Crime Act. This introduced a requirement for all regulated health and social care professionals (registrants) to report FGM found in girls under 18 years of age. The guidance document should be used in conjunction with a larger FGM document from the RCN, *Female Genital Mutilation: An RCN Resource for Nursing and Midwifery Practice* which goes into greater detail. The document includes an A4 poster flowchart which can be used as a quick reference within the pre-travel health risk assessment and is intended to guide the development of local services when caring for girls and women who may be at risk of, or have been abused through FGM. The reverse of this poster includes a map of countries most likely to perform FGM and terms used for the practice. The documents can be obtained at <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-005783> and <https://www.rcn.org.uk/professional-development/publications/pub-005784>.

E-mail address: [janechiodini@btinternet.com](mailto:janechiodini@btinternet.com).



# Female Genital Mutilation

*RCN guidance for travel health services*



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