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**ORIGINAL RESEARCH**

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**What is a Good Looking Penis? How Women Rate the Penile Appearance of Men with Surgically Corrected Hypospadias**

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**ABSTRACT**

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**Introduction.** Some men with corrected hypospadias perceive their penile appearance to be abnormal, although health professionals consider these results satisfactory.

**Aim.** The aim of this study was to investigate how relevant women consider single aspects of penile appearance to be. Moreover, we studied whether women perceive hypospadias-affected surgically repaired genitals (HASRGs) to be as normal-looking as circumcised genitals and identified the most relevant predictors that influence whether a penis is perceived as normal.

**Methods.** In this cross-sectional study, 105 women in different age groups (age range: 16–20, 25–30, and 40–45 years) completed a standardized questionnaire.

**Main Outcome Measures.** Participants had to rate the importance of eight penile aspects and to indicate how normal they found the appearance of standardized photos of 10 HASRGs and of 10 circumcised genitals. Furthermore, they were asked about demographic characteristics and their sexuality.

**Results.** Results showed that women considered the position and shape of the meatus as the least important penile aspect. Furthermore, results showed that HASRGs with distal hypospadias were perceived to be as normal-looking as circumcised genitals, whereas genitals with more proximal hypospadias were perceived as significantly less normal. However, the difference need not be considered clinically relevant, as the effect size was small. Observer-related predictors of a more positive perception of HASRGs were higher age, higher sexual interest, and perceiving the general cosmetic penile appearance as more important and penile length as less important.

**Conclusions.** Overall, women were found to consider the “position and shape of the meatus” as the least important penile aspect. These findings may stimulate reflections regarding the relevance of surgical correction of the meatus in minor forms of hypospadias. In addition, this study indicates that women perceived genitals of men with distal operated hypospadias (which represents the majority of hypospadias) to be as normal as nonaffected, circumcised genitals. **Ruppen-Greeff NK, Weber DM, Gobet R, and Landolt MA. What is a good looking penis? How women rate the penile appearance of men with surgically corrected hypospadias. J Sex Med 2015;12:1737–1745.**

**Key Words.** Hypospadias; Circumcision; Genital Perception; Appearance; Meatus; Penile Size; Sexuality; Patient Outcome Assessment; Penis

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## Introduction

**H**ypospadias is one of the most common penile malformations, occurring in approximately 1 of 200 to 1 of 300 live male births [1,2]. It is a misplacement of the urethral meatus, which may be located at the ventral surface of the penis to the perineum. In most types of hypospadias, the prepuce is split ventrally. More severe forms of hypospadias are associated with a curvature of the penis [1]. Today in Europe and the United States, almost all types of hypospadias are routinely corrected during the first year of life [2] to improve micturition and sexual function and to achieve a slit-like meatus at the tip of the glans [1,2].

Although satisfactory surgical results can be achieved, men with an operated hypospadias are reported to be more dissatisfied with their penile appearance [3–7] and size [3,7] than men without hypospadias. Furthermore, some men with hypospadias-affected surgically repaired genitals (HASRGs) are concerned about having an abnormal penile appearance [3,8]. However, this fear is also common among normal young men without genital malformations [3].

Up to now, it is not clear whether only hypospadias patients themselves consider the appearance of HASRGs to be less normal-looking than nonaffected genitals, or whether others (e.g. potential sexual partners) do too. It is also unclear which aspects of penile appearance are considered to be relevant by women and thus play a role in perceiving HASRGs as normal.

## Aims

The aim of this study was threefold: first, to investigate which aspects of penile appearance are considered to be relevant by women; second, to know whether HASRGs are perceived to be less normal-looking than circumcised genitals; and third, to identify the most relevant observer-related predictors for penile perception.

Following a study [9] that demonstrated that the position of the meatus in a “normal” penis varied widely, we hypothesized that women would consider the position and the shape of the meatus as less important than other penile aspects. Furthermore, we expected women to perceive HASRGs to be as normal-looking as the genitals of nonaffected, circumcised men. Based on studies among nonaffected men [10,11], we further believed that women would not consider penile size to be as relevant as expected by hypospadias patients themselves.

In addition, we postulated that the following variables influence women’s perception of a penis positively: higher age, higher degree of sexual interest, and a higher number of sexual partners a woman has had during her life. Moreover, we expected that a women’s perception of a penis is affected by the importance she gives to the attributes of a penis, such as penile size or general appearance.

## Methods

This cross-sectional study was conducted as part of a larger research project on hypospadias. In the current study, women were asked to rate photosets of men with HASRGs and men with circumcised genitals. Furthermore, they had to evaluate the importance of different aspects of a penis in general.

## Subjects

Subjects were women of three different age groups (age ranges: 16–20, 25–30, and 40–45 years), which we supposed correlate with different degrees of sexual experience. They had no affiliation to the hospital or to any of the patients.

In the youngest age group (16–20 years), 33 of 136 female pupils (24.26%) from schools of two different educational levels agreed to participate. Further, two randomly selected population samples of women (400 women aged 25–30 years, and 400 women aged 40–45 years) were ordered from a local database agency. This agency manages a large address file, which may be regarded as representative of the population. Of those 800 women, 66 women (8.25%) participated in the survey, and 25 women (3.13%) were untraceable. In addition, another six women who were friends of the invited women participated. Finally, a total of 105 women completed the questionnaires.

## Main Outcome Measures

**Development of Photosets for Genital Appraisal**  
Photosets with four standard views of the nonerected penises of men with corrected hypospadias and of circumcised men (controls) were made by a medical photographer at the University Children’s Hospital (Figure 1). Circumcised men were chosen as controls because the absence of a foreskin means they have a similar penile appearance to men with a corrected hypospadias.

To acquire the photosets, an information letter about the study with a consent form was sent to a random sample of 218 men with corrected hypo-

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