



Genital mutilation

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. Australians have diverse cultural beliefs that should be respected within the community. However any cultural practice which results in any individual or group being subjected to procedures which are physically and psychologically harmful is unacceptable.
2. The practice of all forms of genital mutilation is condemned and nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing (however titled) are encouraged to work with community groups involved in eliminating genital mutilation and to act as advocates for vulnerable people and their families.
3. Reasonable efforts and projects which aim to eliminate the practice of genital mutilation are supported.
4. “Female” genital mutilation¹ is illegal in Australia. It is, therefore, illegal for a nurse, midwife or assistant in nursing to assist in “female” genital mutilation. Nurses, midwives or assistants in nursing should report any related activities of which they are aware.
5. All nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing have a duty of care to be informed about the procedure of genital mutilation and be able to provide appropriate and culturally sensitive health education and information on this issue to individuals and groups as required.
6. Those who have experienced genital mutilation should not be discriminated against and should be cared for in a culturally safe and respectful manner. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing caring for or likely to be caring for people who have experienced genital mutilation must be provided with appropriate support education and training.
7. Professional counselling should be provided for those nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing who are distressed by the issue of genital mutilation. This counselling should be provided without cost to the nurse, midwife or assistant in nursing.

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Reference

1. The World Health Organisation defines female genital mutilation as: “... all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons.”