

What's Normal? Influencing women's perceptions of normal genitalia: An experiment involving exposure to modified and non-modified images

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THE CLINICAL QUESTION

- Increasing popularity of labiaplasty
 - 5 fold increase in procedures covered by the NHS in the UK 2001-2011
 - Medicare rebates doubled in Australia
- Research suggests most women believe that "normal" labia minora should not be visible beyond the labia majora
- Aesthetic concerns are the most common reason given for undergoing labiaplasty

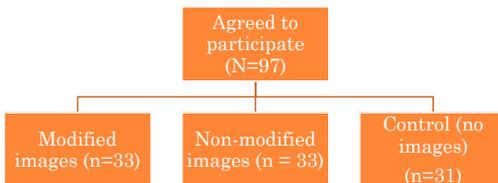
THE CLINICAL QUESTION

- We explore whether misperceptions may underlie genital dissatisfaction and lead to unnecessary surgery

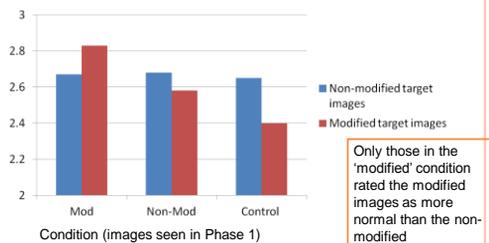
DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH

Participants	97 women aged 18-30
Design	Experiment involving exposure to images of modified and unmodified vulvas
Comparison	Phase 1: Random allocation across three conditions to view a series of images: (1) surgically modified, (2) non-modified, (3) control (no images) Phase 2: All women then used a 4 point Likert scale to rate 20 target images: 10 modified and 10 non-modified for 'looks normal' and 'represents society's ideal'
Outcomes	Women who had viewed surgically modified images rated the modified target images as more 'normal' and more 'ideal'

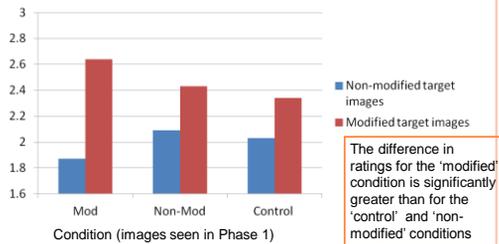
FLOW CHART OF THE STUDY



RATINGS OF "NORMALITY" OF NON-MODIFIED AND MODIFIED TARGET IMAGES



RATINGS OF "SOCIETY'S IDEAL" OF NON-MODIFIED AND MODIFIED TARGET IMAGES



SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- Women in the 'modified' condition rated the modified vulvas as more normal than the non-modified vulvas, significantly different from the control condition, who rated the non-modified vulvas as more normal
- All three groups rated the modified vulvas as more like society's ideal than the non-modified vulvas, but this effect was significantly strongest for the women in the 'modified' condition

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

- Exposure to images of modified vulvas affects women's perceptions of what is normal and desirable
- Greater education and awareness about genital diversity and genital appearance may reduce requests for unnecessary surgery
- The health, education and voluntary sectors and the media have important roles to play

THANK YOU ☺

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