

## **Abstract**

**OBJECTIVE:** To assess the knowledge, attitudes and practices with regard to female genital mutilation (FGM) among gynaecologists in Flanders, Belgium. **METHODS:** A questionnaire-based survey was sent to 724 Flemish gynaecologists and trainees. **RESULTS:** Three-hundred-and-thirty-four questionnaires were returned. The survey revealed gaps in the knowledge of FGM and the provision of care by Flemish gynaecologists to women who had been mutilated. It also appeared that FGM was not properly addressed in the basic and specialized medical training in Flanders, that little was known about codes of conduct issued by the hospitals when these were not lacking altogether, and that knowledge about legislation concerning FGM was deficient. There was much confusion whether re-infibulation is authorized, and what its legal status is. Some respondents considered cosmetic vaginal surgery as a form of FGM and many were in favour of the medicalization of FGM. Gynaecologists were most commonly confronted with complaints related to sexual problems caused by FGM. Finally, the study also showed that only about a third of the gynaecologists were discouraging women from having their daughters excised. **CONCLUSION:** There is a need for a thorough discussion among all those concerned of the ethical and legal aspects of re-infibulation, medicalization of FGM and cosmetic vaginal surgery.