



UKE Paper of the Month April 2013

[Journal of Sexual Medicine, April 2013, PMID: 23347202](#)

Genital Abnormalities in Early Childhood in Sexual Homicide Perpetrators

Martin Rettenberger, Andreas Hill, Arne Dekker, Wolfgang Berner, and Peer Briken

ABSTRACT: *INTRODUCTION:* The present study investigates the relevance of genital abnormalities (GA) like cryptorchidism, hypospadias, and phimosis usually diagnosed in early childhood for the development of psychosexual problems and deficits in a sample of N = 163 convicted sexual homicide perpetrators. *AIMS:* The first aim was to investigate the prevalence of early childhood GA in a sample of sexual homicide perpetrators. The second was to explore differences in the psychosexual development of participants with GA in early childhood compared with those without GA. It was expected that offenders with GA show specific problems in their psychosexual development compared with offenders without GA. *METHODS* The data for the present study were obtained by reanalyzing an existing database derived from a large-scale research project about sexual homicide. Using a predominantly exploratory design we, therefore, divided the total sample into two subgroups (with vs. without indicators of GA). *MAIN OUTCOME MEASURES:* Main outcome measures were the number of sexual homicide perpetrators showing GA in early childhood and the differences of subjects with and without GA with regard to their psychosexual development (i.e., according to sexual deviant interests or sexual dysfunctions). *RESULTS:* The prevalence of GA is substantially higher in this sample than epidemiological studies indicated in the normal population. This result provided first support for the importance of GA in the population of sexual homicide perpetrators. Further analyses indicate significant differences between both subgroups: Offenders with GA in early childhood showed indicators for more sexual dysfunctions (e.g., erectile dysfunction) in adulthood and a distinct tendency of more masochistic sexual interests. *CONCLUSION:* Even if the exploratory design of the present investigation allows no causal conclusions between GA and sexual homicide offenses, the result provided support for the relevance of early childhood sexual diseases in the assessment (and treatment) of offenders who have committed severe sexual violence.

STATEMENT: *The present study is the first investigation of the relevance of genital-related physical problems and abnormalities in early childhood in sexual offenders by using the internationally largest sample of sexual homicide perpetrators. Despite the fact that early developmental experiences are especially significant for the formation of sexual deviance and sexual violence, nothing was known about the role of genital abnormalities in sexual offender samples before. There is now evidence that genital-related physical problems and abnormalities may play a relevant role in the sexual biographies of sexual offenders, so the present study will provide new starting points for future research about the etiology, assessment, and treatment of offenders who have committed severe sexual violence.*

BACKGROUND: The present study was conducted by current and former members of the Institute for Sex Research and Forensic Psychiatry at the University Medical Center Hamburg-Eppendorf. The last author, Peer Briken, is the current director of the institute and the successor of Wolfgang Berner (also co-author of the present study and former director of the institute). The data collection of the present study was part of a large-scale investigation about sexual homicide perpetrators supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Grant Nos. BE 2280/2-1 and BE 2280/2-2).