Large number of neonates with no medical indications present for circumcision at Plateau State Specialist Hospital. There persist a wide variety of opinions among health care providers about how to treat pain in neonates. Newborns feel pain and require the same level of pain assessment and management as adult. Untreated pain in neonates may result in increased morbidity and exaggerated responses to pain in later life, and altered psychological development. It is a common place to withhold anaesthesia during neonatal circumcision because health care providers believed that neonates do not feel pain or that the pain is not significant and has no long lasting consequences.

The aim of this study was to determine whether or not anaesthesia was required for neonatal circumcision. It assessed pain scores and compared the mean pain scores and duration of surgery in neonates undergoing circumcision with or without local anaesthesia.

Pain can be assessed using self-report behavioral observation, or physiological measures. Pain assessment becomes necessary when evaluating pain of circumcision. This is because pain can be prevented, reduced, managed during neonatal circumcision.

Evaluation of pain during neonatal circumcision with or without local anaesthesia was carried out in 72 neonates at Plateau State Specialist Hospital, Jos, Nigeria. They were randomly assigned to local anaesthesia and no local anaesthesia groups with computer generated random numbers and sealed in opaque unmarked envelopes containing group assignments.

The results showed that the mean neonatal pain scores were lower in those that received local anaesthesia and higher in those that did not receive local anaesthesia. This indicated that local anaesthesia usage during circumcision is associated with low neonatal pains scores compared to those who had no local anaesthesia. The investigator therefore endorses the use of local anaesthesia for neonatal circumcision. Unless another method is proven to be as effective, local anaesthesia should be used for all circumcisions.