

## Is SARE real or a myth

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**REAL**  
**OR**  
**MYTH**

Is "SARE" a myth or real ?

By Dr Brighton Chireka

There is no topic that I will not write about even if it means offending some people in our community. I am revisiting the issue of "**SARE**" which is a controversial issue in our Zimbabwean community.

SARE according to our tradition is believed to be a growth that is located at the mouth of the vagina, slightly or just between the vaginal entrance and anus and is said to be very itchy. It is thought to cause children to die and also women to miscarry. It is also believed to be the cause of divorce as the women with SARE are rejected by their partners. There are several things said to be associated with SARE such as causing bad temper in women or decreasing libido or increased libido in some women. Sometimes women are called witches because of this SARE .

I have had heated arguments with several people about this issue and I must admit that it is difficult to dismiss a phenomenon that most people in our community across class and occupation vouch for. Having said that I think we must question this belief as it could be one of many gendered myths that blame women for all misfortunes that happen in marriage. Interestingly this SARE does not affect men , it's only found in women.

Those who believe in it say that it must be cut off . What baffles me is that the " sufferer" goes to

untrained people in backyards to have "operation" to remove this growth. We are seeing self claimed prophets and traditional healers removing these so called growth in women. My question is why are these women not going to see medical doctors?

The sad and frightening thing is that these "backyard surgeons" are not trained in infection control and in human anatomy or physiology. There is risk that they may reuse the same blades to cut several women which can result in the spread of infections such as HIV and Hepatitis B and C. There are no measures taken to prevent women from bleeding to death or facilities to give blood to women if they lose blood during the "operation". Women anatomy down below comes in different forms and shapes and this can confused untrained people who may end up cutting normal anatomy mistaking it for abnormal growth. This has sadly resulted in some women suffering from severe infections or being left with permanent damages resulting in them leaking urine or faeces for the rest of their lives.

Talking to gynaecologists who have specialised in the study of female genitalia , they tell you that from their several years of studying and examining several women , their conclusion is that there is nothing called SARE , it is a myth. They advised women to see them first before subjecting themselves to these "backyard surgeons". Women must value their private parts and must not allow anyone to experiment with their most valued body parts.

My message to everyone reading this article is that the anatomy of the female genital area can be confusing to the layman so please see your doctor and not a prophet or a traditional healer for an "operation" when they do not even know what is a wart or a skin tag on your vaginal area. Several growths can occur down below and these may be polyps, piles, skin tags, warts, cysts or abscess or even ulcers which require different treatments. Your doctor and not a layman will help you in finding the right diagnosis for you and the right treatment.

Female genital mutilation has no place in this modern day era . It is I am afraid barbaric and must not be allowed. Women must take an active role on this issue and not allow ignorance to continue unabated. Divorces are taking place everyday and have nothing to do with the size or shape or structure of women's private parts. I find it demeaning to women to be accused of causing divorces when men are not included.

We know children do die and the major causes of death are malnutrition and infection and not women's fault . The society should put its energy and efforts in alleviating poverty instead of subjecting women to torture and anguish. Women must also liberate themselves from this mentality of accepting to be the scapegoat of everything to do with problems in families. Women do have miscarriages and it's not their fault that these things happen. Couples must support each other and must go together and see a qualified health professional for medical help.

For those of us that read the bible , it is sadly written that my people perish for lack of knowledge as they have decided to ignore the knowledge. I have presented the facts here that SARE is a myth

but I know that there are some who will not take heed . They will continue to go to these backyard places for " operations ". Sadly infection will be waiting for them and some of it may be their cause to bid farewell to this earth. In Shona there is saying; "kwadzinorohwa matumbu ndiko kwadzinomhanyira " (literally translation ; "where their abdomen are beaten , that's where they run to") meaning that people like to get themselves into trouble.

Once again if you have been wrongly "diagnosed " by street "doctors " that you have "SARE" please go and see your qualified registered doctor for assessment because you may be keeping a growth that may turn up to be cancerous or there is no need to worry it's your normal natural body structure. You can only know this if you seek advice from the right people- your doctor .

This article was compiled by **Dr Brighton Chireka** who is a GP and a Patient Engagement Advocate (PEA) in Folkestone Kent in UK. You can contact him on **[info@docbeecee.co.uk](mailto:info@docbeecee.co.uk)**

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