

BANGKOK

by Richard S. Ehrlich

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Everything you always wanted to know about sex... changes

A Bangkok sexual reassignment surgeon shares the graphic details behind these complex procedures

Female to male -- not so easy (Continue)

Sexual intercourse, however, is not possible with a one-inch penis. "Of course they cannot do penetration. Too short. Only rubbing around. But they still can enjoy sexual pleasure."

The other advantage is "no scar at all." Skin grafts, from elsewhere on the body, are not needed if an entire phallus is not required. "Longer, you need a lot of skin. Average size? We can do six inches, eight inches. But average is about four. It depends on the wish of the patient."

To make a penis longer than one inch, a tubular shape must be added, which can function in ways similar to the real thing, albeit with some numbness.

"The reconstructed penis has no sensation. They are able to stand up and have urination. They are able to rub it, and feel like they are getting the female partner excited. And they are able to get the hardness, by using the silicone implant, and have the sexual intercourse."



RICHARD S. EHRLICH

A Thai transsexual in a Bangkok slum displays her implants to her female friends, who are sex workers.

Why switching sex under a surgeon's blade takes time

If you are a woman who wants to become a man, "you have to go through multiple operations. There is no such thing as one stop, like male-to-female," says Preecha. "Male-to-female you can get everything in two weeks, and then you go back home, recuperation for another two weeks, and then you are completely a woman."

Turning a female into a male, however, increases the patient's risk, especially if a woman requests a penis long enough for penetration. "The silicone could extrude. When you have the extrusion back home, the cost is so high to go to see the doctor," Preecha says.

The Thai government recently changed the law on transgender operations and now requires Thai patients to wait at least one year before undergoing a sex change. Sex changes are outlawed completely before the age of 18, and for those aged 18 to 20 parental consent must be obtained.

In response to the new law, Preecha says he sends his Thai patients to two psychiatrists, to confirm the individuals qualify. Most of Preecha's patients, however, are men from America, Australia, Europe, China, Japan, South Korea and the Middle East, who want to become women.



Richard S. Ehrlich is from San Francisco, California. He has reported news for international media from Asia since 1978, based in Hong Kong, New Delhi and now Bangkok.

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