1. Earlier puberty in boys and rising prostate cancer incidence

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Herman-Giddens et al report that the observed mean age of puberty in boys today is 6 months to almost 2 years earlier than in older studies dating back to 1970. At that time, 11.5 to 11.75 was the mean age of puberty in whites. Herman-Giddens et al found a current mean age of 10.1 in whites. The study of Herman-Giddens et al corroborates research on girls, whose breasts develop earlier than in the past. Herman-Giddens et al note that the public health implications need further exploration. (1)

One public health implication may be increased prostate cancer incidence, since early menarche is a risk factor for breast cancer. (2) The prostate cancer incidence has risen from 95 per 100,000 in 1975 to 250 per 100,000 in 1991. Although long-term incidence data indicate a decrease in prostate cancer since 2000, delay-adjusted rates in the most recent time period have increased from 155 (per 100,000) in 2005 to 171 in 2007. (3) Moreover, the long term trend is definitely upward.

Herman-Giddens et al did not analyze weight extensively, but the heaviest boys were entering puberty earlier. It is unclear if weight gain precipitated puberty or was a consequence. In girls adiposity is a risk factor for early menarche and breast cancer. (4) In any event, increasing childhood obesity is detrimental to health, and continued efforts are needed to combat it. (5)

Reference List


**Conflict of Interest:**

None declared

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