

**Press Release for Monograph
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**Bay Area Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Center
Announces the Release of Its New Report
*Puberty, Breast Cancer, and the Environment***

February 10, 2010—San Francisco, CA— What can studying puberty reveal about how breast cancer develops and how it can be prevented?

This is the question that both drives the work of the Bay Area Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Center (BABCERC) and is explored in the BABCERC's new report, *Puberty, Breast Cancer, and the Environment*.

Breast cancer is a disease caused by both genetic and environmental factors. Over the past decade, it has become increasingly clear that exposure to estrogens and estrogen-like compounds found in chemicals in our environment can increase a woman's risk of developing breast cancer.

Researchers at the BABCERC are exploring the hypothesis that puberty is a "window of susceptibility" in which breast cells might be especially vulnerable to potential carcinogens, and that this, in turn could affect breast cancer risk later in life.

"We believe that by studying children and adolescents we have the potential to gain new insights into what causes breast cancer," said BABCERC Director Dr. Robert Hiatt, a professor of epidemiology and biostatistics at the University of California, San Francisco.

Puberty, Breast Cancer, and the Environment provides important information for public health officials, policymakers, cancer researchers, pediatricians, parents, and breast cancer and environmental health advocates. It explains the BABCERC's research focus; provides information about the environmental chemicals the center's basic scientists and epidemiologists are studying; and explains why it is important to encourage girls to be physically active, maintain a healthy weight and reduce exposure to plastic products.

From the outset, the BABCERC has utilized a community-based approach to develop its research agenda and to disseminate its findings. "We produced this report because we believe it is critical to keep the community informed about our work and to translate our findings into meaningful information the public and policymakers can use," said Janice Barlow, who heads the BABCERC's Community Outreach project and serves as the Executive Director of Zero Breast Cancer. "We are proud of the relationships we have built between researchers and the public and to serve as a model for community involvement in cancer research.

The topics discussed in the 36-page report include:

- The BABCERC's Basic Science project, which is investigating how the mammary gland develops and how that development is affected by environmental exposures.
- Why scientists use mice to study how breast cancer occurs in women.
- The BABCERC's Epidemiology project's Cohort Study of Young Girls' Nutrition, Environment, and Transitions (CYGNET), which is following 444 girls as they transition through puberty and investigating how genes, the environment, biology, lifestyle, socio-economic factors, and body composition influence the age that puberty begins.
- How biomonitoring is used in breast cancer research.
- The BABCERC's Community Outreach project, which serves as a liaison between the community and scientists.
- Findings from the BABCERC's research.
- How the breast changes over the course of a woman's life and the distinct time periods when breast cells may be more vulnerable.
- Risk factors for early puberty and why early puberty is related to breast cancer risk.
- Ways to reduce exposure to chemicals that may increase breast cancer risk.

Free copies of *Puberty, Breast Cancer, and the Environment* can be downloaded from the Bay Area Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Center Web site, www.bayarea.bccerc.org or the Zero Breast Cancer Web site, www.zerobreastcancer.org. They can also be obtained by calling Zero Breast Cancer at (415) 507-1949 or by sending an email to info@zerobreastcancer.org

The Bay Area Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Center (BABCERC) is one of four centers nationwide that studies the environmental causes of breast cancer by focusing on mammary gland development during puberty when the breast may be especially vulnerable to environmental influences. The Center is based at the University of California, San Francisco, under the leadership of Dr. Robert A. Hiatt, Director of Population Sciences, UCSF Helen Diller Comprehensive Cancer Center. The Center includes a basic science project, an epidemiology project, and the community outreach and translation core and is a collaborative project involving University of California, San Francisco, Kaiser Permanente, Northern California, California Department of Public Health and Zero Breast Cancer. More information about the BABCERC can be found on its Web site: <http://bayarea.bccerc.org>

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