

## When Puberty Is Precocious

**Ora H. Pescovitz, Emily C. Walvoord (Eds): Contemporary Endocrinology, 468 p, 61 illus., Hardcover, 2007, XII, ISBN: 978-1-58829-742-6**

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The ongoing examination of the control of the onset and progression of puberty, along with a clearer recognition of the clinical conditions that might affect the appearance and progress of normal puberty, has been an important and difficult area of basic and clinical investigation over the past half century. The difficulty of developing experimental models and the appearance of such pubertal modifiers as obesity, intrauterine health, environmental endocrine disrupters, and societal change have made an exploration of pubertal biology quite challenging. The full spectrum of our understanding of the physiology of the developing reproductive endocrine system and the many areas of clinical abnormality are addressed in the extensive, thorough, well-referenced text in which it seems that almost every leader in the field has made a substantive contribution. This text has gathered in its pages most of the current state of the art of pubertal investigation, in many ways summarizing these past decades of research and clinical problem-solving that have been previously best found in the serial symposia entitled the Control of the Onset of Puberty in which many of the authors have made seminal contributions and edited textual reports. Drs. Pescovitz and Walvoord have encompassed the broad range of pubertal controversies with an emphasis on clinical problems and how they are affected by the growing knowledge base of pubertal physiology. This text is mandatory reading for all pediatric endocrinologists and adolescent medicine specialists in training or in the early stages of their careers, as well as being a source of background information and extensive referencing for the entire endocrine community.

The initial section of the text has extensive discussions of the control of puberty in rodents, non-human primates, and in humans. These are by authors who have written voluminously on these subjects in the past and who bring these fields up to date. The newer and less-described area of the genetic regulation of pubertal timing is a welcome addition to the initial section. The second section summarizes the “controversy” regarding the issue of a change in the timing of the onset and progression of puberty that some believe is occurring in the current era. The impact of obesity upon this discussion is substantial and is a major clinical issue for endocrinologists faced with patients who have early or late onset and alterations in the tempo of puberty. The information is laid out in detail, allowing the reader to deliberate the matter. Narrower areas of inquiry are described in Sects. 3, 5, and 6 in which well-defined clinical abnormalities are discussed, newer understanding of pathophysiology is noted, and diverse therapies are examined. These chapters provide clinical information with extensive referencing. In several of the chapters, differential diagnoses are repeated so that could have perhaps been shortened; on the other hand, the presence of the whole discussion in each of the individual chapters facilitates the learning about the specific problem without searching through the text for other relevant discussions. The relationship of adrenal and ovarian androgenesis to intrauterine growth and subsequent weight changes are described at length in part IV. Although there are some overlapping areas, this is an important area and deserves the thorough treatment given. Finally, the last part provides information and reference material to the reader about the problems of endocrine disrupters and international adoption and their consequences. These are exceedingly important areas in the 21st century and the presence of such information in this compendium on pubertal biology describing the

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accelerated tempo of early and rapidly progressive development is an affirmation of that.

In summary, this text provides the opportunity for endocrinologists, and others who will care for children in whom pubertal onset is early or its passage rapid, to be brought up to date with extensive information and referencing. No trainee should pass through fellowship without thoroughly scrutinizing this compendium. It will be used in all sorts of educational settings: students and residents on

endocrine rotations wishing to read on a specific pubertal topic, fellows and junior faculty who are beginning to develop research proposals and need extensive background material, among others. There are scattered typographical errors and I wished there had been more figures in some of the chapters, but these are minor comments. This is a gathering of knowledge that should be appreciated widely and used extensively.