RE: “FROM MENARCHE TO MENOPAUSE: TRENDS AMONG US WOMEN BORN FROM 1912 TO 1969”

The interpretation of secular trends in population chronic disease rates is often hindered by a lack of information about trends in important risk or protective factors. The paper by Nichols et al. (1) is a welcome addition to the relatively limited literature regarding trends in variables associated with breast cancer risk. Freedman et al. (2) previously published data on trends by birth cohort for several potential chronic disease risk factors, including cigarette smoking, various female reproductive variables, age at menarche, and oral contraceptive use, from a nationwide cohort of radiation technologists. They reported that a long-term decrease in mean age at menarche ceased for women in the United States born after 1940, although they did not see evidence of a subsequent increase in mean age at menarche observed by Nichols et al. (1) in two of the three states included in their investigation. Freedman et al. (2) reported information on trends in all variables for men and women and by race/ethnicity (i.e., White, Black, and Asian/Pacific Islander). It would be beneficial if investigators with other large cohorts would publish on birth cohort trends in possible chronic disease risk factors, so as to help inform our understanding of changing disease patterns.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Conflict of interest: none declared.

REFERENCES


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Editor’s note: In accordance with Journal policy, Nichols et al. were asked whether they wanted to respond to this letter, but they chose not to do so.

DOI: 10.1093/aje/kwm228; Advance Access publication August 14, 2007