

Kids Growing Older Younger (KGOY): A Call for Awareness in Pediatric Practice

KGOY – Crianças a Crescer Mais Cedo: Um Alerta para a Prática na Idade Pediátrica

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INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of “Kids Growing Older Younger” (KGOY) reflects a troubling shift in childhood development, marked by the early adoption of behaviors, interests, and products traditionally associated with adolescents or adults. This letter aims to highlight the relevance of KGOY to pediatric health, its contributing factors, and the roles healthcare professionals can play in addressing its implications.

UNDERSTANDING KGOY

KGOY refers to the increasing tendency for children to adopt adult-like patterns, interests, and consumer habits at younger ages. Studies indicate that globalization and digital consumption have accelerated this trend, with the average age of interest in adult-oriented topi-

cs such as fashion and technology decreasing from 12 to 8 years over the past two decades.^{1,2}

KEY DRIVERS

Several factors contribute to KGOY:

- 1. TARGETED MARKETING:** Companies invest heavily in campaigns aimed at younger audiences, particularly in industries such as beauty and technology. The children’s beauty market alone generates \$18 billion annually.³
- 2. DIGITAL INFLUENCE:** Approximately 70% of children aged 8-12 are active on social media platforms, exposed to influencers who promote adult-like behaviors.^{4,5}
- 3. SOCIAL PRESSURES:** Peer groups and school cultures increasingly propagate mature behaviors among

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children.⁶

HEALTH IMPACTS

The KGOY phenomenon has profound physical and psychological implications:

- **PHYSICAL HEALTH:** The premature use of cosmetics exposes children to harmful chemicals, while increased screen time correlates with higher rates of childhood obesity and disrupted sleep patterns.^{7,8}
- **PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING:** Early exposure to unrealistic beauty standards is linked to body dissatisfaction and disordered eating, with cases of eating disorders reported in children as young as 9 years old.⁹ Additionally, the shift away from traditional play toward digital engagement diminishes opportunities for creative and social development.¹⁰

THE ROLE OF MEDIA AND MARKETING

Media and marketing play a pivotal role in amplifying KGOY. Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have normalized trends that cater to adult aesthetics and behaviors among children, often bypassing ethical considerations.^{4,6} The lack of adequate regulation allows industries to exploit children's developmental vulnerabilities for profit.^{1,5}

IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDIATRIC PRACTICE

Healthcare professionals are uniquely positioned to address KGOY through:

1. **Parental Education:** Guiding parents on the risks of premature exposure to adult-oriented content and behaviors.
2. **Advocacy for Regulation:** Supporting policies that limit marketing of adult products to children.
3. **Holistic Care:** Monitoring children for early signs of physical and emotional distress linked to KGOY behaviors.

A CALL TO ACTION

While the KGOY phenomenon reflects broader societal trends, targeted interventions can mitigate its impacts. Pediatricians and Family Doctors, in collaboration with educators, policymakers, and caregivers, can advocate for evidence-based approaches to pre-

serve childhood development while promoting healthy behaviors.

Protecting the innocence of childhood is not merely an ethical imperative; it is a public health priority.

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