

Working Together in Cincinnati: Explaining the *Growing Up Female* Study to Young Girls

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Collaboration is essential to the success of the NIEHS/NCI-sponsored Cincinnati Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Center (BCERC). The Cincinnati BCERC and its Community Outreach and Translation Core (COTC) consist of partnerships between local breast cancer advocates/survivors, service providers and researchers. BCERC advocates are interested in learning about and assisting with the BCERC epidemiologic study of pre-pubescent girls called *Growing Up Female*. This study investigates the potential impacts of environmental exposures on female development and maturation. The collaboration allows advocates to contribute both their personal experience as survivors and mothers as well as their professional experience as teachers and health professionals. Service providers bring their expertise as counselors, sensitive to the innuendos of language and pediatric concepts of health and well-being. And researchers bring their experience working with young children in health-related studies.

In 2005, the Support Network, a COTC sub-committee, created a coloring book called *Growing Up Female*. This engaging book depicts the research measures that the young girls participating in the study will undergo, such as weight/height measurements and blood sample collection. The national scale of the study and its scientific purpose are presented in easy to read text with inviting pictures to color. Participation in the study is presented as an experience that makes the girls "feel special" because they afford scientists the opportunity to "learn more about how girls change as they grow." The coloring book has been approved by the Institutional Review Board for distribution to the girls at the end of their study visit, in addition to use as an educational tool in recruitment.

The changing purpose of the Support Network and the rationale for the coloring book will be presented. Pages of the coloring book will be displayed and some of the issues pertaining to age-appropriate language and picture content will be discussed. Personal reflections of sub-committee members will be presented to demonstrate the range of reasons why advocates, service providers and researchers worked together to create this novel publication and the reactions of the young girls to their coloring book.

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