Reviewer's report

Title: Early pubertal onset and its relationship with sexual risk taking, substance use and antisocial behaviour: a cross-sectional study

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Reviewer: Muideen Bakare

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Title: Early pubertal onset and its relationship with sexual risk taking, substance use and antisocial behaviour: a cross-sectional study

The authors made attempt at assessing effect of early pubertal onset on sexual risk taking, substance use and antisocial behaviour. They also assessed predictive factors of early pubertal onset which included being overweight, more childhood illnesses (female) and younger age at the time of the survey (male) according to their report. The manuscript also identified early pubertal onset to be associated with alcohol and other substance use, sexual debut and unprotected sexual intercourse, tendency for aggressive behaviour in males and being bullied and time off school in females.

The outcome of the study is insightful, but I have the following comments:

Major Compulsory Revision
1. One would notice that being overweight was identified to be predictive of early pubertal onset. I however, doubt the reliability of self assessment of weight status retrospectively as employed by this study. There are a number of confounding factors that may influence this, ranging from re-collection to self perception of what being overweight implied which may vary from one individual to another, especially in western culture that promote slimness as a measure of beauty. Therefore, apart from highlighting the limitations of retrospective design of the study, I would advise that the authors discuss separately the limitation of this retrospective self assessment of weight status as employed by this study.

2. The authors inferred that more childhood illnesses in females were also predictive of early pubertal onset in their samples, but they did not provide further information about what types of childhood illnesses they assessed. Was it just any childhood illness, whether chronic or acute illness? The nature of the illnesses assessed by the authors would offer further useful information.

Minor Essential Revisions

Abstract
Third sentence under “Results Section”:
Adding “-----------------------------younger age (at the time of survey)”, would make the statement to be clearer to the readers.
Discretionary Revisions
Reference numbers are better placed before the ‘period sign’ rather than after the ‘period sign’.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: Yes, and I have assessed the statistics in my report.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests.