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# Genital exams at school irk parents

By Cheryl Wetzstein  
THE WASHINGTON TIMES

A middle school in eastern Pennsylvania has come under parental fire and media scrutiny for conducting genital examinations of sixth-grade girls — several without their parents' consent.

About 50 girls at J.T. Lambert Intermediate School in East Stroudsburg last month were marched to the school nurse's office, ordered to take off their clothes and then examined one-by-one by a female pediatrician.

"They said they were looking for genital warts, but on a sixth-grader?" said Katie Tucker, the mother of an 11-year-old girl who was examined, despite her pleas to notify her parents.

On Monday, the East Stroudsburg School District issued a summary of its investigation into parents' complaints: The genital examinations were part of a planned exam of girls who had not been seen by a family physician

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## EXAMS

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and were "within the parameters" of state health rules. "No improprieties" occurred, the summary concluded.

What's more, Trooper Shannon Yates, spokeswoman for the Pennsylvania State Police, said yesterday, "An investigation was done and no criminal conduct was found to have been done. So basically the investigation is closed."

But some parents, believing their parental rights have been trampled, have turned to talk radio, such as "The Michael Reagan Talk Show," based in Sherman Oaks, Calif., to bring attention to the incident and their anger at it.

"They've all said, 'It's over.' But it's not," said Mrs. Tucker, who with her husband, Paul, is considering legal action against the school district in East Stroudsburg, about 70 miles north of Philadelphia.

The case "sounds like a flagrant violation of parental rights," said Greg Erken, spokesman for Of the People, a parents' rights advocacy group in Arlington.

In a telephone interview yesterday, the Tuckers, who live in Bushkill, Pa., said their daughter and 20 other sixth-graders were called to the nurse's office March 19 and

told they had to take a physical exam.

"They were told they needed to take off their clothes and just leave their underwear on. They were standing in line, perfectly embarrassed, and then they found out the doctor was doing genital exams," Mrs. Tucker said.

"The girls were scared. They were crying and trying to run out of the door, but one of the nurses was blocking the door so they couldn't leave.

"My daughter told the other nurse that 'My mother wouldn't like this. I want to call her.' And they said, 'No.' And my daughter said, 'I don't want this test done.' And the nurse said, 'Too bad,'" Mrs. Tucker said.

The female physician "put the girls in a room and had them lie down on a table, spread-eagled, with nothing covering them," and conducted an examination for genital warts and lesions, she said.

"The girls had no idea what they were doing. The doctor didn't talk to them. She just did the genital exam and didn't say one word," Mrs. Tucker said. "All my daughter could do was stare up at the ceiling. And it hurt. And it still hurts."

When the Tuckers heard from their daughter what happened, they began calling school officials and other parents. They learned

that about 50 girls in all were examined, and that, while notification papers were sent home, many parents said they had not received them or didn't realize it included a genital exam, Mrs. Tucker said.

The Tuckers said they were told they were overreacting and that the exam was legal.

School officials could not be reached for comment yesterday. "I'm sorry. I have no comment," an office worker at J.T. Lambert said before hanging up the phone.

State health officials did not return phone calls yesterday.

According to state health guidelines obtained by The Washington Times, public schools are required to obtain a "medical examination and comprehensive appraisal of the health" of children at certain grades.

The guidelines, which do not specifically call for genital exams, say parents are to be notified and are urged to attend the exams. An exam may be waived if the child is seen by a family physician and the school is so notified.

Doctors have defended the pediatrician who performed the exams.

The genital exam is a "very important part of the physical," eight area doctors wrote in a letter, according to the March 28 edition of the Pocono Record newspaper.

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