Cell Phones for Children: "Transitional Objects"

March 29, 2007

Over the last four years, the number of eight-year-olds in the U.S. with cell phones more than doubled to 506,000 and the number of nine-year-olds ballooned to 1.25 million, according to an analysis by the Yankee Group, a consulting firm in Boston, cited in a "style" piece in today's *New York Times.* There will be 10.5 million preteen cell phone users by 2010, the Yankee Group predicts.

The 31-paragraph *Times* story does not offer a word about the possible health implications of long-term cell phone use, but there is this view from the deputy director of the Center for Children and Technology in New York City: Cell phones can serve as "transitional objects" for young children suffering separation anxiety from their parents, and that phones with "reasonably interesting games" might have some "redeeming educational value." ... "The only harm is an economic one." What does a preteen use a cell phone for? A mother of a seven-year-old gave this example: "He'd call me from the cafeteria, screaming, 'Mom, I'm at lunch'."

children/phones, New York Times, Center for Children and Technology,

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