Several years ago, we ran a Pediatric Perspectives article on the "choking game" that highlighted its dangers (10.1542/peds.2009-1287). What is the game? It involves attempts to auto-strangulate or have others attempt to cut off a person's air supply to the point where that someone passes out, but it can also lead to death or serious permanent neurologic impairment. This week we release a study by Ibrahim et al. (10.1542/peds.2016-0778) looking at the prevalence of this game being played through data obtained from surveys of more than 20,800 teens in eighth grade in Oregon. The study looked at outcomes from those who play the choking game alone as well as those who play it in a group. Sadly the results suggest that close to 4% of eighth graders are playing the game with close to 20% playing it alone and not with friends or in a group. The authors highlight the danger of these children playing the game alone by sharing other characteristics of this solo choking-game population-- including having high rates of suicide contemplation and poorer overall mental health.

Do you ask your teen patients about whether they have ever played the choking game or know others who do? This article may prompt you to do so. The data are 3 years old. Do you think the prevalence of the game has increased or decreased the past few years? We welcome your thoughts on what you are seeing relative to this game being played by your patients, and hope you will comment by responding to this blog, sharing a comment on our journal website or posting your thoughts on our Facebook or Twitter pages.