Reproductive and Perinatal Epidemiology
Discussion questions for Lecture 2: Conception and Pregnancy

Wilcox et al., BMJ, 2000.

1. This paper assesses day of ovulation to determine the "fertile window".

a. Does day of ovulation translate into days on which conception is likely to occur? How may the two differ?

b. Does the likelihood of conception differ with intercourse before versus after ovulation?

2. Natural family planning (NFP) methods use periodic abstinence to avoid pregnancy. The Symptothermal method uses day of changes in cervical mucus (increased fluid mucus around time of ovulation due to estrogen surge) and rise in basal body temperature after ovulation to indicate the onset of the luteal phase.

a. Pregnancy rates with NFP are often around 20% per year. Discuss reasons for this.

b. How might this paper help improve NFP?

Nichols et al., AJE, 2006

This study assess retrospectively reported ages at menarche and menopause from women enrolled as controls in a breast cancer cancer study.

   a. Describe the trends by birth cohort in ages of menarche, menopause and the reproductive lifespan.
   b. Are the changes in age at menarche consistent within the data (i.e., between regions)?
   c. Is there within region consistency in age at menopause?
   d. Discuss possible reasons for the changes in age at menarche and menopause. Could the authors have examined possible causes in more detail from their own data? If so, what variables would you suggest?