

From The Times

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## Outrage at Miss Bimbo website

**The internet game, aimed at girls aged 9 to 16, gives users 'bimbo dollars' to buy lingerie, diet pills and nightclub outfits. It has attracted 200,000 members in Britain**



[www.missbimbo](http://www.missbimbo)

Steve Bird

A website that encourages girls as young as 9 to embrace plastic surgery and extreme dieting in the search for the perfect figure was condemned as lethal by parents' groups and healthcare experts yesterday.

The Miss Bimbo internet game has attracted prepubescent girls who are told to buy their virtual characters breast enlargement surgery and to keep them "waif thin" with diet pills.

Healthcare professionals, a parents' group and an organisation representing people suffering anorexia and bulimia criticised the website for sending a dangerous message to impressionable children.

In the month since it opened the site, which is aimed at girls aged from 9 to 16, has attracted 200,000 members. Players keep a constant watch on the weight, wardrobe, wealth and happiness of their character to create "the coolest, richest and most famous bimbo in the world". Competing against other children they earn "bimbo dollars" to buy plastic surgery, diet pills, facelifts, lingerie and fashionable nightclub outfits.

The website sparked controversy when it was introduced in France, where it attracted 1.2 million players.

Dee Dawson, the medical director of Rhodes Farm Clinic, which treats girls aged from 8 to 18 who suffer eating disorders, said: "This is as lethal as pro-anorexia websites. A lot of children will get caught up with the extremely damaging and appalling messages."

Susan Ringwood, the chief executive of Beat, an organisation that supports those suffering eating disorders, said that the website could make girls believe that weight and body size manipulation were acceptable.

The Miss Bimbo site was set up by Nicholas Jacquart, a French entrepreneur. He moved to Tooting, South London, recently and with a 30-year-old businessman called Chris Evans set up Ouza Ltd to promote the website in Britain.

Its introduction came as research showed that children as young as 6 were developing acute eating disorders such as anorexia and bulimia. Yesterday it emerged that increasing numbers of teenagers were

undergoing breast enlargement surgery.

Registration on the Miss Bimbo site is free but it makes money by charging £1.50 per text message to buy "dollars" to spend on the characters. On the rules section it states that despite contestants wanting "to keep your bimbo waif thin . . . every girl needs to eat, every now and again". It suggests feeding the character to prevent her dying of starvation.

Bill Hibberd, a spokesman for Parentkind, a parents' group, said: "Children's innocence should be protected as far as possible. It depends on the mindset of the child but the danger is that after playing the game some will then aspire to have breast operations and take diet pills.

"The danger is that a nine-year-old girl fails to appreciate the irony and sees the bimbo as a cool role model. Then the game becomes a hazard and a menace."

Mr Jacquart claims the game teaches children about the real world and is simply harmless fun.

He said: "The game is structured in such a way that it simply mirrors real life in a tongue-in-cheek way. It is not a bad influence for young children. They learn to take care of their bimbos. The missions and goals for the bimbos are morally sound and teach children about the real world.

"If they eat too much chocolate in the game, it is bad for their bimbos' bodies and their happiness levels compared to if they eat fruit and vegetables, which reinforces positive healthy eating messages.

"The breast operations are just one part of the game and we are not encouraging young girls to have them."

Mr Evans admitted that the story in the script had been created by "lads" and no professional advice was sought about how girls may interpret issues surrounding weight loss and gain.

Nick Williams, from Shrewsbury, Shropshire, said that he was appalled when he saw his daughters Katie, 9, and Sarah, 14, on the site pondering whether to buy their character breast operations and facelifts.

Mr Williams, 42, said: "I noticed them looking at possible breast operations and facelifts at the game's plastic surgery clinic.

"It is irresponsible of the site's creators to be leading young girls astray. They are easily influenced at that age as to what is cool and these are not things they should be encouraged to aspire to before they are old enough to be making up their own minds."

### **Peer pressure**

Users are set targets:

#### **Level 7**

After you broke up with your boyfriend you went on an eating binge! Now it's time to diet . . . Your target weight is less than 132lbs

#### **Level 9**

Have a nip and tuck operation for a brand new face. You've found work as a plus-size model. To gain those vivacious curves, you need to weigh more than 154lbs

#### **Level 10**

Summertime is coming up and bikini weather is upon us. You want to turn heads on the beach don't you?

#### **Level 11**

Bigger is better! Have a breast operation

#### **Level 17**

There is a billionaire on vacation . . . You must catch his eye and his love! Good luck