



Innovative Dementia Care Model Designated as an Edge Runner by the American Academy of Nursing

Nurse-Designed Model Focused on Protecting Vulnerable Communities Selected for Recognition

Washington, D.C. (November 18, 2021) – The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) recognizes **A Caring Science Model of Specialized Dementia Care for Transforming Practice and Advancing Health Equity** created by **María de los Ángeles Ortega**, DNP, APRN, GNP-BC, PMHNP-BC, CDP, FAANP, FAAN as an Academy Edge Runner. Edge Runners are nurse-designed, innovative models of care or interventions with significant, demonstrated outcomes to improve health, impact cost, and influence policy.

“The Academy is proud to recognize this unique and timely program as an Edge Runner, especially considering that November is designated as [National Family Caregivers Month](#). The focus of this model, adults with special needs, highlights the vital role nurses play in supporting all members of the public to advance wellness and health equity,” said Academy President Kenneth R. White, PhD, AGACNP, ACHPN, FACHE, FAAN.

As life expectancies continue to grow and more families are supporting individuals living with Alzheimer’s Disease or Related Dementias (ADRD), nurses and caregivers are at the forefront of facilitating healthy environments for these patients. **A Caring Science Model of Specialized Dementia Care for Transforming Practice and Advancing Health Equity** creatively guarantees delivery of effective, high-quality programs and services dedicated to aging individuals, including those living with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, specifically those with Down syndrome, who also exhibit ADRD symptoms, or those at risk for developing ADRD. In addition, through evidence-based behavioral symptom management training and expert consultation, the program provides family caregivers and staff with the resources and education to support patients’ health and their own well-being.

“The intent of this work, grounded in caring, is to create a healing environment that would help individuals with ADRD and their families be as physically, socially, and emotionally healthy as possible,” said Dr. Ortega, Director of the Louis and Anne Green Memory and Wellness Center at Florida Atlantic University, where the program is housed. “Our focus is on opening, advancing, and expanding the specialized dementia work needed to increase access to and meet the complex needs of individuals with memory disorders and their families and caregivers. Through a comprehensive array of personalized services and programs of care, support, research, education, and community outreach, our model is advancing the future of dementia care.”

During the coronavirus pandemic, the program successfully transitioned almost all services offered pre-COVID-19 to virtual telehealth and telemedicine-based platforms and tele-social work services. Additionally, during the pandemic, the program opened access to include out of state and out of country participants. In the last two years, the program has expanded to include behavioral and mental health services for patients and caregivers, integrating psychiatry and psychotherapy consultations and treatment. The project has expanded to meet the needs of persons who cannot readily come to the facilities and those who are uninsured.

“Dr. Ortega’s expertise in specialized dementia work will continue to transform the system of dementia care delivery with its focus on personalized services and community-based resources,” said Dr. White. “Through the power of social connection and authentic engagement, Dr. Ortega is a leader in making

Florida a healthier place to live for individuals with ADRD and their families.” [Learn more about Dr. Ortega’s model.](#)

All Academy Edge Runner profiles are available to view [here](#).

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