



# American Academy of Nursing

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## **American Academy of Nursing Designates Bernadette Melnyk an Academy Edge Runner for “Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE) for Children, Teens, and College-Age Students”**

*Nurse-Designed Program Works with Children, Teens, and College Students’ to Decrease Anxiety and Depression while Increasing Healthy Lifestyle Behaviors*

**Washington, D.C. (May 23, 2019)**— The American Academy of Nursing (Academy) recognizes Bernadette Melnyk, PhD, APRN-CNP, FAANP, FNAP, FAAN as an Academy Edge Runner for her successful intervention, *Creating Opportunities for Personal Empowerment (COPE) for Children, Teens, and College-Age Students*. The Academy’s Edge Runners are nurse innovators who have charted a new course and ushered in remarkable improvement to major healthcare challenges at every level. Edge Runner models of care and interventions demonstrate significant outcomes, clinically and financially, through the leadership, ingenuity, and determination of nurses.

One out of four children, teens, and college-aged youth suffer from a mental health problem, yet less than 25% receive any treatment.<sup>i</sup> This lack of treatment is largely due to an inadequate number of mental health providers. Untreated mental health problems are highly dangerous for this vulnerable population, as suicide is the second leading cause of death in 10- to 34-year olds.<sup>ii</sup> Therefore, implementing interventions to address this major public health epidemic is imperative to protect and appropriately treat children, teen, and college-age students with mental health problems.

“COPE for Children, Teens, and College-Age Students demonstrates the value and effectiveness of early intervention strategies,” said Academy President Karen Cox, PhD, RN, FAAN. “By first understanding mental health challenges young people face, Dr. Melnyk’s program is transforming the way students think about their own mental health while learning lifelong strategies for healthy living.”

Dr. Melnyk designed COPE for Children, Teens, and College-Age Students, which delivers sessions of evidence-based cognitive-behavioral therapy interventions to improve both physical and mental health outcomes in children and youth. Over 12,000 diverse children, teens, and college-age students have participated in the 44 states and five countries (Canada, United Kingdom, South Africa, Australia, and Lebanon) that have implemented the program. Dr. Melnyk’s program has been successful in lowering depression, anxiety, suicidal intent, and anger within those participating.

“Although numerous studies across more than two decades have shown that COPE is effective in treating depression and anxiety,” said Dr. Melnyk, “my dream is that it is heavily used in schools and community settings across the U.S. and the globe as a preventive intervention strategy to curb the rapidly escalating and high prevalence of mental health problems and suicide in children and youth.”

Central to the Edge Runners initiative is the potential for these innovative models to be widely utilized. The National Cancer Institute gave the COPE program its highest rating (5 out of 5) for its dissemination capability. Dr. Melnyk’s Edge Runner profile of the program is available [here](#).

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**The American Academy of Nursing** ([www.AANnet.org](http://www.AANnet.org)) serves the public and the nursing profession by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. The Academy's more than 2,700 fellows are nursing's most accomplished leaders in education, management, practice, and research. They have been recognized for their extraordinary contributions to nursing and healthcare.

**CONTACT:**

Ellie Cook | 202-777-1175 | [ecook@aannet.org](mailto:ecook@aannet.org)

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<sup>i</sup> Merikangas KR, He JP, Burstein M, Swanson SA, Avenevoli S, Cui L, Benjet C, Georgiades K, Swendsen J. Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in U.S. adolescents: results from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication--Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). *Journal of the American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry*. 2010 Oct;49(10):980-9. [PMID: 20855043](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20855043/)

<sup>ii</sup> Hedegaard, Holly, Sally C. Curtin, and Margaret Warner. Suicide Mortality in the United States, 1999-2017. NCHS Data Brief, no 330. Hyattsville, MD. National Center for Health Statistics. 2018. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db330.htm>.