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Edge Runner, Fellow Among Panelists Discussing Obesity and Mental Health Challenges

Washington, DC (February 8, 2011) – Fellow Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk, PhD, RN, CPNP/PMHNP, FNAP, FAAN, led a panel discussion, “America’s Children in Peril: Solving the Obesity and Mental Health Epidemics,” at the National Press Club on January 20th, addressing the commonalities between mental and physical health problems among adolescents.

The event, sponsored by Arizona State University (ASU) and the ASU College of Nursing & Health Innovation, was attended by approximately 225 guests and featured an influential cast of speakers including Kyu Rhee, MD; Peter S. Jensen, MD; Marie Morilus-Black, MSW; Russell R. Pate, PhD, FACSM; Joanne Kenen; and Madelyn Clark. The panelists focused on the magnitude of the challenge, the relationships between cognitive problems and obesity among children, and the innovative solutions to curbing the double-sided epidemic.

[America’s Children in Peril - Solving the obesity and mental health epidemics](#) from [ASU News](#) on [Vimeo](#).

According to ASU, “approximately 15 million children and adolescents in the United States have a mental health problem that impairs their functioning at home or at school, but less than 25% receive treatment.” Some of these problems are associated with being overweight. The forum called for various stakeholders to coordinate tactics to combat disturbing statistics and improve children’s mental and physical health.

“I think we need to realize that these frightening statistics are believed to be even higher due in large part to inadequate screening by primary care providers,” Melnyk said during the forum. “We have to integrate physical and mental health care in primary care where families feel comfortable to take their children to deal with common concerns.”

Melnyk said she holds screening and assessment workshops for nurse practitioners and physicians to identify cognitive issues and prepare a workforce ready to deal with both physical and mental problems. As an Edge Runner of the Academy’s *Raise the Voice* campaign, which promotes nurse-led innovations that achieve significant clinical and financial outcomes, she has been highlighted for her development of the Keep Your Children/Yourself Safe & Secure (KySS) program and her COPE Program for Parents of Preterm Infants.

KySS is a public awareness and educational campaign that raises awareness and knowledge of child and adolescent mental health/psychosocial problems. The campaign, developed in 2001 through the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (NAPNP), promotes integrated physical and mental health care for children and adolescents – a break from the standard of practice in most primary care settings throughout the United States.

To learn more about KySS visit http://www.aannet.org/files/public/KySS_template.pdf.

To learn more about COPE visit www.copeforhope.com.

To learn more about the event visit <http://www.asu.edu/childhealthforum/>.

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