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Nemours Children's Health Releases PedsAcademy Toolkit

Resources help create hospital-university internships that educate students, prepare teachers

ORLANDO, Fla. (April 24, 2023) – Nemours Children's Health today released thePedsAcademy® toolkit, a free guide to planning, implementing and evaluating a hospital-university internship based on the PedsAcademy model, which expands academic support for hospitalized children and prepares future teachers.

PedsAcademy, established through a partnership between Nemours Children's Health and theUniversity of Central Florida (UCF), is a first of its kind hospital-based internship program for future teachers. Teacher interns from UCF provide individualized instruction to patients (PK-12) while receiving specialized training about how to support students affected by chronic health conditions.

In the United States, more than 40 percent of school-aged children and adolescents have at least one chronic health condition. Despite the need for teachers with competencies in this area, traditional training does not fully prepare teachers to support children with chronic health conditions, who may experience problems with school performance, including reduced attention and concentration, poor motivation and absenteeism.

The new toolkit outlines how health systems and universities can create their own hospital-university internship programs. The toolkit offers practical recommendations for program structure, advice on implementation, and sample documents to help other hospitals or universities establish a hospital-university internship program based on the PedsAcademy model.

"Teacher preparation plays a vital role in supporting the success of all students, including those with disabilities and/or medical needs," said Rebeca Grysko, PhD, CBIS, PedsAcademy Program Coordinator and Supervising Teacher at Nemours Children's Hospital, FL. "PedsAcademy not only better prepares future teachers, but also enables Nemours to expand access to instruction and educational services for patients and their families."

Student teachers participating in PedsAcademy learn how to adapt instruction to meet each patient's unique needs. Through access to dynamic resources, student teachers utilize apps that take required content for students and enhance it through augmented reality. These alternative educational methods help motivate students to engage in the material while keeping up with their peers at school.

"Since 2018, PedsAcademy has offered a high level of training and education to both educators and hospitalized children alike," said Allison Gertel-Rosenberg, MS, Vice President, Chief Policy and Prevention Officer, Nemours Children's Health. "This new toolkit will allow us to share our learnings over the last five years with other hospitals and universities. Through PedsAcademy, every child has the opportunity to continue learning regardless of their health status, which is yet another example of how Nemours Children's Health is going well beyond medicine."

The benefits of PedsAcademy for families include:

- Keeping students on track with developmental and academic milestones during hospitalizations
- Personalized support tailored to each patient's needs
- Filling any education gaps
- Reducing stress on parents

For hospitals, universities and teacher candidates, PedsAcademy provides a unique set of benefits that include:

- Preparing student teachers to work with chronically ill children in a classroom setting
- Engaging in research on how to effectively prepare student teachers to work with chronically ill children
- Serving as a differentiator for hospitals, making them more appealing to pediatric patients and their families
- Providing an alternative internship placement that includes the opportunity to work with pediatric patients and their families
- Enhancing student teachers' flexibility and adaptability, self-confidence for teaching, ability to empathize and accommodate students' needs.
- Promoting student teachers' desire to continue their education and training in related fields.

"PedsAcademy is a shining model of a partnership with UCF's School of Teacher Education and Nemours through which university students can benefit from robust internship experiences while hospitals benefit from additional support for young patients," says Andrea Borowczak, Professor and Director of UCF's School of Teacher Education. "Student teachers receive specialized training and hands-on experience that allow them to fulfill the educational and socio-emotional needs of children with chronic and complex medical conditions. It's a win-win scenario for everyone involved."

Learn more about the PedsAcademy program and the new toolkit, visitNemours.org/PedsAcademy.

About Nemours Children's Health
Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest multistate pediatric health systems, which includes two free-standing children's hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours Children's seeks to transform the health of children by adopting a holistic health model that utilizes innovative, safe, and high-quality care, while also caring for the health of the whole child beyond medicine. Nemours Children's also powers the world's most-visited website for information on the health of children and teens, Nemours KidsHealth.org. Nemours KidsHealth is a pioneer and leader in pediatric health content that has been trusted by millions worldwide for more than 25 years.

The Nemours Foundation, established through the legacy and philanthropy of Alfred I. duPont, provides pediatric clinical care, research, education, advocacy, and prevention programs to the children, families and communities it serves. For more information, visit Nemours.org.

About the University of Central Florida
The University of Central Florida is a public research university in Orlando that unleashes the potential of people and ideas to positively change the world. Founded in 1963, UCF and its 13 colleges offer more than 230 degrees from the university's main campus, downtown campus, hospitality campus, health sciences campus, online and through multiple regional locations. UCF is an academic, partnership and research leader in optics and lasers, modeling and simulation, engineering and computer science, hospitality, health care and video game design. According to U.S. News & World Report, UCF ranks among the nation's 20 most innovative universities.

For further information: Che Parker, che.parker@nemours.org

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