

# M.D. NEWS

A BUSINESS AND LIFESTYLE MAGAZINE FOR PHYSICIANS

## Nemours: Reaching Out to Primary Care

By Lloyd N. Werk, M.D.



At Nemours, we believe that part of our commitment to our community requires investing in our local doctors' capacity to deliver the best possible care. For this reason, Nemours entered into a partnership over a year and a half ago with the University of South Florida and the Florida Pediatric Society to create the Florida Improvement Network for Kids — a practice-based network designed to fight childhood diseases throughout the state by improving how care is delivered.

The Florida Improvement Network for Kids provides a forum for primary care providers to discuss ways to improve the care they deliver to children and share best practices, new techniques and tools. The program draws its leadership from Dr. Lloyd N. Werk of Nemours, Drs. Sharon Dabrow and Denise Edwards of the University of South Florida and Dr. David Wood of the Duvall County Health Department.

As the group began to take shape in late 2006, the Florida Improvement Network for Kids chose childhood obesity as its initial area of focus in order to combat the growing epidemic in this country. Childhood obesity can lead to significant health problems and cause lifelong health effects.

The number of children and adolescents in this country that are overweight has more than doubled since the 1970s. Kids today are spending less time exercising and more time watching television and using other electronic devices than ever before. Childhood obesity is an epidemic that affects 17% of children 6-19 years old and is associated with a higher body mass in adulthood that can compound health problems. Approximately 15% of this population is at risk of becoming overweight. It is necessary to recognize obesity problems and intervene early in a child's development in order to prevent long-term health problems such as diabetes. Primary care doctors, under new guidelines due to be published in November, will soon be charged with taking an aggressive role in identifying and caring for children with these conditions.

Since the Florida Improvement Network for

Kids obesity initiative began in January, 43 clinicians in 28 practices have used the network's patient educational materials, obesity tools or shared experiences with each other online and via monthly teleconferences. Each member chooses to participate at his or her own level of interest. The most involved members attended a workshop, collaborate on conference calls and use an online website that was specifically created to help physicians calculate obesity and provide resources to aid in decision-making. The website provides a centralized location for historical trends, guidance on diagnosis and patient education materials. Primary care physicians from around the state have used the website to create over 300 patient records that can then be tracked over time to see patient progress.

The network has already begun to see successes. Seven Duvall County Health Department Clinics in the Jacksonville area joined the Florida Improvement Network for Kids early in the year. As a result of the obesity program and the awareness that it has generated, more than 30 children have been referred to nutritionists that would otherwise not usually receive this type of consultation.

The Florida Improvement Network for Kids initiative is funded through a grant from the Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida, a philanthropic organization that supports community-based health care initiatives, that was awarded to the University of South Florida in 2006. The grant's funding began in January and will last for approximately two years. The obesity program will continue until the end of the year, and in 2008 there are plans to add an entirely new children's health initiative.

For more information on how to become a member of the Florida Improvement Network for Kids, please contact Dr. Lloyd N. Werk at (407) 650-7177 or via e-mail at [lwerk@nemours.org](mailto:lwerk@nemours.org).

Lloyd N. Werk, M.D., MPH, FAAP, has been with Nemours Children's Clinic Orlando since 1999. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD, in 1983, a Doctor of Medicine degree from Tel Aviv University in Tel Aviv, Israel, in 1987, and a Master of Public Health degree

from Boston University, Boston, MA, in 1999. He completed a pediatric residency at Children's Hospital of Buffalo in Buffalo, NY. He practiced primary care pediatrics for several years on Long Island, NY, prior to completing a general academic pediatrics fellowship at Boston University in Boston, MA. Since 2000, Dr. Werk has led teams of clinicians and researchers in projects among the various specialties as a core member of Nemours Clinical Management Program (NCMP) — a program in Nemours that evaluates clinical variability and promotes best practices through health services/outcomes research and quality improvement interventions. Dr. Werk has authored and contributed to several manuscripts, presentations and abstracts related to how care is delivered and can be improved. He serves on several professional societies' boards and committees. He has academic appointments with Florida State University and the University of South Florida. At Nemours, Dr. Werk is the Co-Director of an integrated multidisciplinary program for overweight children focusing on the medical, nutritional and psychosocial assessment and management of obesity and its multiple comorbidities. ■