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Operation Wellness: A Pediatric Health Initiative

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While many public health initiatives target adults, establishing healthy habits in the pediatric population is paramount given the alarming pediatric health issues on the rise. Current estimates report 19% of American children obese, one in five children suffering from a mental health disorder, and approximately 6 million children dying annually from preventable disease. Given these major pediatric health concerns, we identified four areas where educational opportunities can be made.

The purpose of this project is to disseminate widely accepted guidelines to 3rd-5th grade students and their parents in a concise, informative, and interactive format to be administered by physician assistant or health professions students. A literature search was conducted to collect these guidelines from the CDC, USDA MyPlate, American Academy of Pediatrics, and American Academy of Child Adolescent Psychiatry pertaining to diet, exercise, mental health, and personal hygiene to create four educational modules. The modules include a detailed lesson plan with a brief introduction to the topic, materials for interactive and age appropriate activities, and a parent handout to stimulate discussion between the student and their parents. Each lesson plan was carried out by PA students within the Wichita State University program to four 3rd grade classrooms.

Implementation of these modules will establish a foundation for a healthy lifestyle in the pediatric population thereby helping to combat childhood obesity, improve mental health, and lower the incidence of preventable disease. Readily available materials and activities can broaden the audience and increase the number of children being taught healthy habits at a young age. Furthermore, the involvement of physician assistant and health profession students in administering these modules ensures the pediatric health issues are addressed appropriately in the future.