RAAPS Receives Award for Innovative Approaches to Adolescent Health

Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine honors Dr. Jennifer Salerno’s ‘outstanding original and innovative’ teen risk assessment tool

ANN ARBOR, MICH. – (March 25, 2013) – The Society for Adolescent Health and Medicine (SAHM) awarded Dr. Jennifer Salerno the 2013 Hilary E.C. Millar Award for Innovative Approaches to Adolescent Health Care for her work on the Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Preventive Services (RAAPS) screening tool.

The annual award recognizes outstanding original and innovative programs that focus on adolescent health care. RAAPS represents a completely novel approach to teen risk screening – by providing a more effective way to identify what risks adolescents are taking, and the counseling tools that help health professionals achieve meaningful dialogue on risk reduction (across a wide range of risk topics).

Previous winners of the prestigious award include the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the World Health Organization and the American Medical Association.

“Just being nominated is an honor, but to be selected out of the thousands of adolescent programs available reinforces the vital role of risk screening for teens today,” said Dr. Salerno, president and founder of Possibilities for Change, the parent company of RAAPS, which is part of the University of Michigan Tech Transfer Venture Accelerator.

Dr. Salerno accepted the award at the SAHM annual national meeting in Atlanta.

During her acceptance speech, Dr. Salerno shared the evolution of RAAPS, which was based on her work at the University of Michigan. As a nurse practitioner working with teens, Dr. Salerno understood the need to screen for risky behaviors, but struggled to connect with teens in a traditional interview style and had trouble incorporating long health-risk surveys in the appointment time available.

RAAPS was born out of research and practical need to overcome some of the most common barriers to adolescent risk screening: time, provider experience across multiple risk topics, lack of risk-reduction counseling tools – and teen engagement. The web-based system captures data in a consistent manner and catalogs each response.

The company tagline “Teens don’t always share. But they will RAAP,” speaks to the issue of teen engagement.
“Let’s face it, teens can be difficult to connect with,” says Dr. Salerno. “Once you do bridge that gap, you have to be prepared to deal with almost any risk – and there’s a wide range of topics between counseling a teen on wearing a seatbelt and wearing a condom.”

RAAPS provides counseling tools, including evidence-based talking points, to help professionals in their discussions with teens. And outcomes data show this collaborative counseling approach is making a difference. Looking at the same group of teens over the period of a year, RAAPS users show a significant decrease across a wide range of health risks. For example, fewer kids smoking and drinking while more exercising, using condoms and eating right.

A key criteria for the selection of the Hilary E.C. Millar Award is that the program advance the cause of adolescent health and well-being – now, and for future generations to come.

“With 75-percent of avoidable death and disease among adolescents directly related to their choices, risky behaviors among teens have reached epidemic proportions,” says Dr. Salerno. “Identifying risk and making a change in those behaviors is mission critical for all of us who are working with teens on a daily basis.”

Additional Resources
RAAPS data was cited in a recent press release from the Michigan Department of Community Health announcing new guidelines to help the state’s health care providers address risk behaviors in adolescents. Surveys completed by 20,000 youth in school-based health centers across Michigan showed that more than one-quarter (28%) say they have trouble managing anger; 24 percent reported depression; and 16 percent have been bullied. See the complete release here. RAAPS compiled its complete, nation-wide survey results for 2012. Those figures were announced in a release titled ‘Mental Health Issues a Higher Risk than Drugs and Alcohol for Teens, available on the RAAPS website.

About RAAPS
The Rapid Assessment for Adolescent Preventive Services is a validated, 21-question health risk assessment tool, which can be completed by adolescents in 5-7 minutes using any device with internet access. After completing the survey, teens receive specific health resources pertinent to their risk behavior, and clinicians utilize RAAPS’ evidence-based messages to provide counseling on identified risks. With this secure online system, clinicians electronically document the counseling they provide and receive individual and aggregated reports on their patient population by age, risk factor, demographics, and over time. In addition, results can be compared to a “benchmark” population of adolescents who have completed the online survey. For more information about RAAPS, contact Jennifer Salerno, DNP, CPNP, FAANP at jsalerno@raaps.org or visit www.raaps.org.