



HOAG MEMORIAL HOSPITAL PRESBYTERIAN
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Hoag Confronts Growing Rate of Youth Mental Health Issues with Acclaimed ASPIRE Program

NEWPORT BEACH, Calif., April 17, 2018 --- Whether the underlying factors are social media influences, fear of failure in school or peer pressure, youths in Orange County and the nation are increasingly afflicted with severe depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and other [mental health disorders](#) -- and Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian is stepping up efforts to address the alarming trend locally.

Hoag officials today announced that the [Pickup Family Neurosciences Institute at Hoag](#) is offering the acclaimed [ASPIRE program](#) to help Orange County youth and their families confront and tackle the life-changing challenges of these disorders.

ASPIRE stands for After-School Program for Interventions and Resiliency Education and is an evidence-based intensive outpatient program that treats teen anxiety, depression and other mental health conditions, including possible co-occurring substance abuse. Founded in Northern California in 2010, the program is designed for youth between the ages of 13 and 17.

With locations in Newport Beach and soon in Irvine, the intensive outpatient program is held after school hours, four days a week for eight weeks. The program uses dialectical behavioral therapy and expressive arts to help teens develop and practice healthy behaviors and coping strategies. ASPIRE builds interpersonal relationships through educational groups, skills groups and weekly family meetings, requiring parents or guardians to participate during the course of the program.

The ASPIRE program started at Hoag, with the support of the generous donor community, and is becoming part of a collaborative initiative that includes Hoag, Mission Hospital and CHOC Children's.



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“Like the nation as a whole, Orange County has witnessed troubling growth in the number of teens in our communities who are not receiving the help they need for depression and other mental health issues,” said [Sina Safahieh, M.D., board certified in child and adolescent psychiatry and program director of ASPIRE at Hoag](#). “The resources we offer through ASPIRE provide teens and their families effective tools and resiliency training to overcome current mental health concerns, navigate future life stressors and thrive.”

According to the 2017 OC Community Indicators Report -- an annual assessment of major issues impacting the health and wellbeing of children and adults -- the hospitalization rate for major depression among the county’s children and youth shot up 117 percent between 2005 and 2014. More than one-third of Orange County child-care providers reported having to expel a child due to “challenging behavior.” Meanwhile, the report found that “23 percent of girls and 15% of boys reported they ‘seriously considered committing suicide’ in the 12 months preceding the survey.” The Community Indicators Report also found that although “nearly two-thirds of children needing mental health care receive the services they need” -- sizable and growing numbers do not.

Local mental health trends mirror national ones. According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), 20 percent of youth between the ages of 13 and 18 are living with a mental illness. In 2015, the Department of Health and Human Services estimated that approximately three million teens between the ages of 12 and 17 had at least one major depressive episode that year. Half of all lifetime cases of mental disorder began by age 14 -- and fully 75 percent by age 24, according to NAMI. The association says the average delay between onset of symptoms and intervention is between eight and 10 years, offering an opportunity for much earlier treatment.

“Treatment for teens needs to be instituted early, and be evidence-based rather than too little, too late,” said [Michael Brant-Zawadzki, M.D., senior physician executive at Hoag, and the Ron & Sandi Simon Executive Medical Director Endowed Chair, Pickup Family Neurosciences Institute](#). “Hoag is using this novel program for adolescents to combine clinical intervention by a multidisciplinary team of specialists with prevention training that strengthens future functioning for the entire family. We understand that when parents and teens come to us, they’re asking -- and expecting -- us to provide help that works.”



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Despite the growing number of youth afflicted with mental health issues locally and nationally, experts say there are as yet no definitive known causes for this trend that afflicts both affluent and non-affluent youth.

Researchers say a youth's environment coupled to genetic predisposition, and in some cases self-medication by substance abuse likely plays a key role in the development of mental health issues: Peer pressure, social media's outsized influence on how youths view and compare themselves to others, and real or imagined pressure outperform their peers all can be factors, according to mental health experts.

The support, early intervention tools and access to care in the ASPIRE program are designed to accompany the services of a psychiatrist board certified in working with children and adolescents, who provides assessment and diagnosis through personal sessions and leadership to the program.

For more information, visit hoag.org/ASPIRE.

ABOUT HOAG MEMORIAL HOSPITAL PRESBYTERIAN

Hoag is an approximately \$1 billion nonprofit, regional health care delivery network in Orange County, California, that treats more than 30,000 inpatients and 425,000 outpatients annually. Hoag consists of two acute-care hospitals – Hoag Hospital Newport Beach, which opened in 1952, and Hoag Hospital Irvine, which opened in 2010 – in addition to eight health centers and eleven urgent care centers. Hoag is a designated Magnet® hospital by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). Hoag offers a comprehensive blend of health care services that includes five institutes providing specialized services in the following areas: [cancer](#), [heart and vascular](#), [neurosciences](#), [women's health](#), and orthopedics through Hoag's affiliate, [Hoag Orthopedic Institute](#), which consists of an orthopedic hospital and two ambulatory surgical centers. In 2013, Hoag entered into an alliance with St. Joseph Health to further expand health care services in the Orange County community, known as St. Joseph Hoag Health. Hoag has been named one of the Best Regional Hospitals in the 2017 - 2018 *U.S. News & World Report*, and *Becker's Hospital Review* named Hoag as one of the 2016 "100 Great Hospitals in America" – a designation Hoag has received four times. For an unprecedented 22 years, residents of Orange County have chosen Hoag as one of the county's best hospitals in a local newspaper survey. Visit www.hoag.org for more information.

ABOUT PICKUP FAMILY NEUROSCIENCES INSTITUTE

Delivering a personalized, integrated approach using best-practice guidelines, the most advanced technology, and integration of medical specialists in the most appropriate facilities, Hoag's Pickup Family Neurosciences Institute provides the highest quality care for patients with brain and spine disorders including stroke, aneurysms and vascular malformations, brain tumors, epilepsy, movement disorders, memory and cognitive disorders, pain, minimally invasive spine surgery, multiple sclerosis, addiction medicine and sleep disorders, as well as the mind-body interface of



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behavioral health. Several of Hoag's neuroscience programs have received high acclaim, including Hoag's stroke program, which was the first hospital in Orange County and the second in California to be named a Certified Comprehensive Stroke Center by DNV GL Healthcare and was awarded the American Stroke Association's Get With The Guidelines Stroke Gold Plus Performance Achievement for Hoag's high standard of stroke care. And as one of the first centers in the U.S. to offer the most advanced radiosurgical treatment system available, Leksell Gamma Knife® Perfexion™, Hoag's brain tumor program is the largest in Orange County and is also among the top volume programs in the western United States.

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