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**NEWS RELEASE**

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**New study shows Parents as Teachers’ home visiting model interrupts**

**harmful effects of stress in early life on the brains of young children**

**ST. LOUIS, MO – February 18, 2021 –** A recent groundbreaking study shows that implementation of the Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visiting model, the nation’s most highly replicated early childhood home visiting program - interrupts the harmful effects of Early Life Stress (ELS) on the brains of young children.

The Zurich Equity Prevention Project with Parents Participation and Integration (ZEPPELIN) research study, one of the largest longitudinal home visiting studies in Europe, with a randomized controlled study design, shows that PAT services may have lasting biological benefits that prevent mental health concerns in children. The ZEPPELIN study provides the PAT home visiting model to families in Switzerland experiencing social burdens.

PAT is a 36-year-old non-profit, headquartered in St. Louis, MO, whose home visiting professionals partner with parents and child and family-serving organizations to improve early development, learning, and health outcomes for children while strengthening families through parent education programs.

Published in *Development and Psychopathology*, a peer-reviewed medical journal, the study showed that the ELS of children caused by disagreement between parents and maternal depression increased changes to the children’s brains that were then associated with symptoms of depression, aggression, and ADHD in children.

However, a three-year intervention plan, which began at birth for the children involved in the study and centered on the delivery of PAT services, has shown that changes to the brain resulting from ELS were prevented in children who received PAT services.

“This is some of the most encouraging and exciting news we’ve received. It further validates the benefits of our parent engagement efforts in the early stages of a child’s brain development,” said Allison Kemner, PAT’s vice president of research and quality. “The authors concluded that PAT may have positive and long-lasting effects on the mental and behavioral health of children living in families with psychosocial difficulties.”

The researchers also pointed to this biological change in the brain as a potential biomarker for the timely identification of children that would benefit from this intervention. To read the entire study, click here: <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0954579420001984>.

Additional findings from the ZEPPLIN study were published in 2019 in the *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, a peer-reviewed academic journal, revealed that children ages 0-3, in high-risk families, benefitted greatly from PAT's evidence-based home visiting model, which helped improve their cognition, self-control, language skills, and overall behavior. Findings were also found for mothers participating in PAT showing increased parenting skills and displayed more sensitivity to their children.

Families participating in that study included those faced with a multitude of stressful experiences that inhibit optimal health and family stability, including (but not limited to), babies born prematurely and parents with low educational attainment. Most families in the study were socially disadvantaged immigrant families. Researchers are continuing this study to follow the children through kindergarten to look at long-term sustainable outcomes.

“Those findings had real-world implications for struggling families because they showed that PAT’s home visiting model is having a significant impact on children’s mental health in families at risk of poor outcomes,” Kemner said.

"A child's early language and cognition and the development of self-regulation is directly associated with later school performance and success later in life," she said, adding, “Children in our programs wake up less frequently during the night to bottle feed, sleep longer through the night, have better vocabulary and self-control, and they score higher on language and cognition tests.”

Together, the ZEPPELIN studies reinforce the positive impact PAT’s home visiting program has on young children and their early development.”

***Sources:***

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**About Parents as Teachers**

Parents as Teachers (PAT) builds healthy communities, thriving families, and children that are healthy, safe, and ready to learn. It matches parents and caregivers with trained professionals who make regular personal home visits during a child’s earliest years in life, from pregnancy through kindergarten. The internationally-recognized evidence-based home visiting model is backed by 35 years of research-proven outcomes for children and families. PAT currently serves nearly 200,000 families in all 50 U.S. states, 115 Tribal organizations, six other countries, and one U.S. territory. Parents as Teachers National Center, Inc., is a non-profit organization headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri.

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***EDITOR’S NOTE:*** *Allison Kemner, PAT’s vice president of research and quality, is available for interviews to further discuss this latest research and positive impact that Parents as Teachers evidence-based home visiting has on children and their parents. Please contact me at the number above to arrange an interview.*