

AHRQ Long COVID Care Network

Comprehensive Long COVID Care for Underserved Communities: Innovative Delivery and Dissemination Models (COMUNIDAD)



Institution

The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio

Geographic Service Area

South central Texas region

Priority Population

Hispanic/Latino and rural south central Texas community

Project Period

2023–2028

Contact

Principal Investigators

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Project Overview

The University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio (UTHSCSA) manages the UT Health Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic, which offers care to San Antonio and the south central Texas region. Established in July 2020, the clinic provides patient care both in-person and via telehealth. Clinicians affiliated with the Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic are experts in neurology, neuropsychology, cardiology, pulmonary medicine, infectious diseases, physical therapy, physical medicine and rehabilitation, and integrative medicine. Additionally, the clinic offers behavioral and mental health services to ensure holistic care.

As part of the AHRQ Long COVID Care Network's initiative, UTHSCSA has launched the Comprehensive Long COVID Care for Underserved Communities: Innovative Delivery and Dissemination Models (COMUNIDAD) project. COMUNIDAD aims to enhance care for individuals with Long COVID by expanding access to comprehensive, coordinated, and person-centered care in underserved, primarily Hispanic/Latino, and rural communities in south central Texas. The project also seeks to establish a Center of Excellence at the UT Health Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic, providing state-of-the-art clinical care and educational outreach to primary care clinicians.

Notable Features

- The UT Health Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic is leveraging the ECHO (Extension for Community Healthcare Outcome) Superhub at UTHSCSA's Center for Research to Advance Community Health (ReACH) to expand its clinical reach, foster community partnerships, disseminate knowledge, and improve the quality of care across south central Texas through telementoring.
- In collaboration with UTHSCSA's RECOVER study, eligible individuals who receive in-person or telehealth care through the UT Health Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic can participate in clinical trials of Long COVID interventions; studies of symptom progression, pathobiology, and social determinants of health; and additional research opportunities.
- UTHSCSA will create a 15-minute, low-tech Long COVID evaluation for community providers.

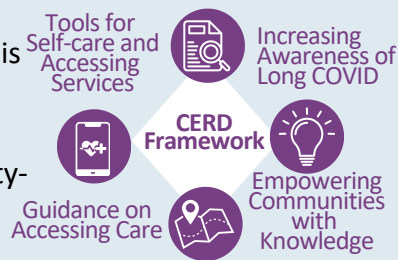
Project Goal: Provide Holistic Care and Expand Multidisciplinary Networks for Long COVID Management to Underserved Communities

Specific Aims

UTHSCSA aims to 1) expand holistic, multidisciplinary Long COVID care at the UT Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic, 2) collaborate with community providers on best practices for basic Long COVID evaluation and management, and 3) use the Community-Engaged Research Dissemination framework to share Long COVID information among the largely Hispanic/Latino and rural south central Texas community.

Expand Multidisciplinary Collaborative Networks for Holistic Care

Information about Long COVID in the community is often inadequate or incorrect. UTHSCSA is employing the Community-Engaged Research Dissemination (CERD)



framework to create a community-focused intervention aimed at improving Long COVID recognition, increasing health literacy, guiding individuals on how and where to access care, and ultimately empowering them to manage some Long COVID symptoms independently. This intervention will be led by trained and trusted community health workers, also known as *promotoras*. UTHSCSA is collaborating with Health Confianza, a community-wide health literacy nonprofit, to leverage its established health literacy curricula and Long COVID resources to develop new programming tailored to community needs and communication preferences. An iterative feedback process will be utilized throughout the project to engage with community partners regarding the Long COVID health literacy dissemination effort and assess the impact of its initiatives on health literacy related to Long COVID.

By the Numbers

- More than **1,200** patients have been served since July 2020
- **44%** of patients at the clinic identified as Hispanic/Latino
- **71** ECHO sessions engaged **868** individuals across a spectrum of professions within UT Health San Antonio Engagement Network

Expand Holistic Care and Best Practices for Long COVID Management

UTHSCSA is establishing a Center of Excellence in Long COVID to develop evidence-based, symptom-specific best practices for evaluating, treating, and self-managing Long COVID. This initiative builds on the UT Health Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic's existing model, which centralizes referrals, employs standardized assessments, and integrates rehabilitation teams throughout south central Texas. To expand access to holistic, multidisciplinary care, a nurse clinical coordinator will enhance care coordination. Initial visits will cover physical, behavioral, psychosocial, functional, and social needs, including co-occurring conditions. A social worker will address social determinants of health, while mental and behavioral health support will be provided through an integrated primary care model, ensuring a comprehensive approach to care.

To support sustainability and workforce development, UTHSCSA will host clinical rotations and reflective training for trainees across various health professions, including medical, social work, nursing, physical therapy, and psychology to address Long COVID symptoms and co-occurring mental health issues. Additionally, UTHSCSA will leverage the ReACH ECHO Superhub to offer an ECHO telementoring series on Long COVID and collaborate with South Texas Area Health Education Centers (ST-AHEC) to create a Long COVID community of practice. This effort aims to improve primary care clinicians' ability to manage Long COVID locally, with complex cases referred to the UT Health Post-COVID-19 Recovery Clinic.

UTHSCSA will evaluate the project's impact through a mixed-methods approach. Metrics include the number of patients receiving Long COVID care, patient-reported access to care, patient satisfaction, improvement in Long COVID symptoms, and patient-reported health-related quality of life.

"COMUNIDAD is taking a multi-pronged approach to alleviating the scourge of Long COVID in our community and nationally."

- Joel Tsevat, MD, MPH, Multi-Principal Investigator



Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality