

AHRQ Long COVID Care Network

The Atlanta Long COVID Collaborative: A Multi-Health System Long COVID Coordinated Care Model Serving a Diverse Metropolitan Population



Institution

Emory University

Geographic Service Area

Georgia

Priority Population

Socio-demographically diverse metro Atlanta population

Project Period

2023–2028

Contact

Appointment Scheduling

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Project Overview

Emory University operates two Long COVID Care clinics in the Atlanta area: the Emory Long COVID Clinic at Emory University Hospital Midtown and the Grady Long COVID Clinic at Grady Memorial Hospital.

The Emory Long COVID Clinic, founded in August 2020, offers comprehensive care through a multidisciplinary network of specialists in pulmonary/critical care, cardiology, behavioral health, neuropsychology, neurology, internal medicine, pain management, physical medicine & rehabilitation, physical therapy, and speech therapy.

The Grady Long COVID Clinic, founded in January 2021, aims to address the significant impact of Long COVID on underserved populations. The clinic provides comprehensive physical and psychological assessments through a subspecialty network including pulmonary/critical care, cardiology, behavioral health, neuropsychology, neurology, internal medicine, physical medicine & rehabilitation, physical therapy, rheumatology, gastroenterology and endocrinology. The clinic was paused in December 2022 due to staffing shortages and has been reopened through the AHRQ Long COVID Care Network.

This project aims to expand access to evidence-based care across Georgia's metropolitan areas by implementing a Coordinated Care Model, which includes protocols, workflows, and tools for patients, families, clinicians, and advocates.

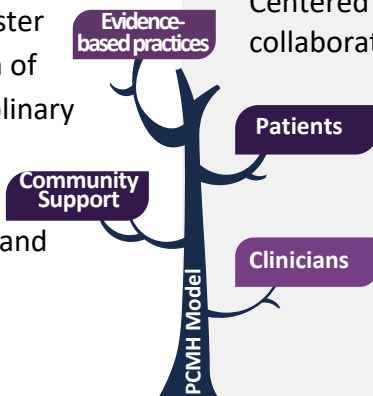
Notable Features

- To prioritize shared decision-making and person-centered care, a patient advisory committee including Long COVID patients and national patient advocates is being established. The committee is providing feedback on care coordination, patient education, and clinic effectiveness. Its input will help refine clinic protocols and operations, ensuring patient perspectives are integrated. The committee will assist in improving health literacy by reviewing the readability of standard communications.
- The Community Engagement Team is partnering with faith-based, civic, and health-sector leaders to connect with Georgia communities most impacted by COVID-19, ensuring they receive accurate information about Long COVID and expanding community-based referrals to improve access to care. Community events and health forums are central to promoting culturally sensitive care and sustaining the initiative's efforts.

Project Goal: Increase Care Coordination to Optimize Health Outcomes and Expand Multidisciplinary Networks and Behavioral Support

Specific Aims

Emory University aims to 1) improve access to Long COVID care for the socio-demographically diverse metro Atlanta population, 2) bolster person-centered care through expansion of integrated care coordination, multidisciplinary case conferences, and patient advisory committees, and 3) expand pre-existing multidisciplinary collaborative networks and behavioral health services to provide comprehensive, holistic care.



Improving Access to Person-Centered Care for Long COVID

The Emory and Grady Long COVID clinics use a Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) model that prioritizes collaborative, community-oriented, and evidence-based care. This model fosters teamwork between clinicians and patients, delivering high-quality, timely care tailored to individual needs and preferences.

The clinics integrate care across three settings: in-person, virtual, and e-consult visits. Virtual visits bridge gaps in health equity by enhancing accessibility for patients with severe symptoms or transportation challenges.

Each patient undergoes a social needs assessment conducted by the clinic's social worker. This assessment will identify social risks and specific needs, enabling services such as obtaining durable medical equipment, coordinating home health services, arranging transportation, and ensuring seamless integration with the patient's primary care clinician. The social worker also conducts financial assessments for social security, disability, Medicare, or Medicaid coverage and community support resources to reduce healthcare costs and disparities. Additionally, principal investigators will implement a peer education series to build capacity for Long COVID care within the primary care setting, both locally and regionally.

The effectiveness of the clinics' outreach and impact will be assessed through electronic health records, patient satisfaction surveys, focus groups, structured interviews, and feedback from patient advisory committees. This comprehensive, person-centered approach aims to provide optimal care for patients with Long COVID.

Multidisciplinary Collaborative Networks and Behavioral Health for Holistic Care

The Long COVID Clinics are enhancing comprehensive patient care by integrating a behavioral health program performed by psychologists and neuropsychologists with specialized skills in resiliency training and coping strategies for Long COVID. Patients will also receive referrals to physical therapists and rehabilitation specialists experienced in designing individualized rehabilitation regimens based on each patient's unique Long COVID profile. Additionally, the clinics will offer group sessions, fostering a supportive community and encouraging connectedness among patients and their families.

To enhance multidisciplinary collaboration, the clinics' Long COVID-specific referral networks are expanding and subspecialists are participating in multidisciplinary case conferences.

By the Numbers

- **300+** patients with Long COVID were enrolled at the Emory and Grady Long COVID clinics
- **40%** of the patients enrolled at the Emory Long COVID Clinic identify as African American, **48%** as White, **6%** as Asian, **1%** as Hispanic, and **5%** as other
- **70%** of the patients enrolled at the Grady Long COVID Clinic identify as African American, **22%** as White, **5%** as Hispanic, and **3%** as other

"We are grateful to AHRQ for acknowledging this critical need and for investing in the health and well-being of individuals heavily impacted by Long COVID."

- Tiffany Walker, MD, Principal Investigator



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