

# AHRQ Long COVID Care Network

## The Pitt IMProving Access to Culturally relevant long COVID care and Treatment (IMPACCT) Program



### Institution

University of Pittsburgh and  
University of Pittsburgh Medical  
Center

### Geographic Service Area

Pittsburgh and western  
Pennsylvania

### Priority Population

Rural and underserved  
individuals

### Project Period

2023–2028

### Contact

#### *Principal Investigators*

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### Project Overview

The Division of Pulmonary, Allergy, Critical Care, and Sleep Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center (UPMC) houses the UPMC Post-COVID Recovery Clinic (PCC), serving Pittsburgh and western Pennsylvania. The UPMC PCC serves as a central hub for patients seeking care for Long COVID and utilizes telemedicine to improve its reach. The PCC team initiates care coordination for common symptoms such as brain fog and fatigue and its experts in pulmonary medicine address exertional issues.

As part of the AHRQ Long COVID Care Network, UPMC PCC is partnering with the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine's Department of Family and Community Medicine and the Black Equity Coalition (BEC) to create the Pitt **IMP**roving **A**ccess to **C**ulturally relevant Long **COVID** care and **T**reatment (IMPACCT) program. Through a collaborative care approach, this program is designed to enhance access to both primary and specialty care for patients with Long COVID, with a particular focus on underserved, marginalized, and rural populations. The IMPACCT program aims to advance the recognition, diagnosis, and management of Long COVID among community providers, striving to address health inequities and improve patient outcomes.

### Notable Features

- The UPMC PCC is partnering with UPMC Family Medicine clinics and their Practice-Based Research Network of community clinicians to reach over a dozen clinics and hundreds of providers and trainees to participate in IMPACCT educational trainings and sessions on Long COVID.
- The UPMC PCC offers patients telemedicine appointments. Telehealth services span western and central Pennsylvania, enabling access to care for individuals from rural communities.
- The BEC is a Black-led group of physicians, researchers, epidemiologists, public health experts, community funders, and government officials whose goal is to create systemic change for vulnerable populations. As an IMPACCT partner, BEC provides input on culturally relevant care and social determinants of health to ensure an equitable approach in Long COVID care.

# Project Goal: Develop a Culturally Relevant Educational and Clinical Model to Improve Awareness, Access, and Delivery of Person-Centered Long COVID Care

## Specific Aims

UPMC's IMPACCT program aims to 1) expand the capacity of providers to address Long COVID by developing comprehensive, culturally informed educational materials and targeted outreach programs; 2) provide equitable access to specialized Long COVID care for patients by facilitating telemedicine and in-person specialty care and expanding its learning healthcare system capabilities; 3) empower Long COVID patients by establishing an education platform and a dedicated support group; and 4) establish a mixed-methods, formative and summative evaluation approach to monitor the effectiveness and sustainability of the IMPACCT program.

## Empowering Patients and Enhancing Access to Care

To support Long COVID patients, the PCC is collaborating with the BEC and UPMC Family Medicine community clinics to develop an education platform and support group for patients with Long COVID. Through the web-based platform, patients will be able to access relevant Long COVID information, peer support, and resources for managing symptoms. The virtual patient support group will provide opportunities for patients to ask questions and discuss Long COVID with clinical experts.

Additionally, the IMPACCT program is conducting community education campaigns through workshops, webinars, and targeted outreach to enhance understanding and awareness, particularly within the Black community. This includes adapting BEC initiatives, such as its Facebook Live series and educational sessions with BEC partners like barbershops, churches, and schools to extend outreach to underserved communities.

The IMPACCT program's patient empowerment activities will be evaluated through patient surveys and by tracking support group participation.

## By the Numbers

- Approximately **60%** of patients are self-referred to the UPMC PCC
- The UPMC PCC is averaging **dozens** of new patients with Long COVID per week.

## Developing Culturally Informed Educational Materials

To expand equitable access to Long COVID care, PCC clinicians and the BEC are co-developing a culturally relevant framework that incorporates health equity and social determinants of health. This framework will inform educational programs and materials on Long COVID diagnosis and treatment strategies for healthcare professionals in community settings. The educational program will feature a website with resources, lectures and workshops, clinical tools, and other materials. To evaluate the effectiveness of the education program, surveys will capture clinicians' perceived self-efficacy and experiences managing patients with Long COVID.

## Increasing Equitable Access to Long COVID Care

To improve access to specialized care, the IMPACCT program is integrating e-consultations between PCC and community clinicians. Using a "train-the-trainer" model, the PCC aims to educate and empower both current and future clinicians. Additionally, the PCC and a Long COVID therapeutics committee will leverage the UPMC learning health system to systematically combine internal data with available evidence, refining Long COVID strategies to enhance care delivery. Evaluation of these activities will involve tracking utilization of e-consults and specialty referrals. Additionally, qualitative interviews will be conducted with key informants, such as nurse practitioners, clinicians, and residents in the UPMC health system, to assess how well the learning health system approach incorporates best practices for managing Long COVID.

**"Our unique framework of provider education, culturally relevant care guidelines, and enhanced patient support will deliver comprehensive, person-centered, and timely care to Long COVID patients and serve as a model for fostering equity in diagnosis, treatment, and support of patients across diverse communities."**

**- Dr. Alison Morris, Principal Investigator**



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