

## Peer Support Shown to Relieve Community Health Burdens, Reduce Costs and Improve Access to Care

*Report Focuses on Primary Care Settings and the Patient-Centered Medical Home*

LEAWOOD, KS, May 27, 2015 – [Today](#), Peers for Progress, a program of the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation, the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative (PCPCC), and the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) issued a [report](#) from their joint conference, held this spring. The conference explored the vital role that peer support through group visits, support groups or individual coaching provided by Community Health Workers (CHWs), *Promotores de Salud*, Navigators, and others can play in improving patient health outcomes, particularly when integrated into primary care and Patient-Centered Medical Home (PCMH) settings.

Evidence presented at the conference demonstrated that CHWs and others providing peer support not only reduce healthcare costs and improve access to care, but also are practical and adaptable to a variety of practice settings. Peer support and PCMH share common values and goals, emphasizing healthy lifestyles, disease prevention, and whole person care that is responsive to individual, family, and community needs. The [conference report](#) follows the release of a suite of [program development resources](#) designed to support and guide efforts for implementing and improving peer support programs.

“Our health care system is in a dire situation: the lack of practical resources and frameworks for building lasting programs means pressing human health needs are left unmet,” said Edwin B. Fisher, global director of Peers for Progress. “Evidence from around the world shows that primary care and patient centered medical homes can improve care and outcomes. Peer support can be the linchpin that links people in need to their care. Together, they can take big steps to assure “the right care at the right time for the right price.””

When integrated into primary care settings, peer support has been shown to be highly successful. Peer support also plays a critical role in implementing the goals of the Affordable Care Act to emphasize prevention, and to achieve greater quality of and satisfaction with care.

"When you look at the research, you'll find a link between the contributions of peer support and

positive health outcomes," said Marci Nielsen, PhD, MPH, Chief Executive Officer of the Patient-Centered Primary Collaborative. "Many of these programs have the ability to extend beyond the reach of traditional fee-for-service health care. Peer support is a natural complement to advanced primary care and can be an important part of promoting clinic-to-community linkages, offering in-home support to patients and their families or caregivers, while at the same time reducing unnecessary and costly care."

Peer support can also further a key objective of the PCMH: to engage the whole person in the management of their care, and to contextualize care within the perspective of the values, interests, family, language and community that frame individual lives. This approach has been shown to be particularly effective in closely-knit communities.

"*Promotores de salud* are effective at changing health behaviors because they are able to connect with communities in a way that is culturally and linguistically appropriate, and account for the challenges that individuals and communities are facing," said A. Manuela McDonough, Associate Director, Institute for Hispanic Health, NCLR. "Within the Latino community, peer supporters have helped individuals learn to eat healthier foods, exercise in a way that fits into their daily routines, and better follow the plans they arrange with their clinical teams. We are looking forward to seeing these programs expand in tandem with patient-centered medical homes and primary care."

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### **About Peers for Progress**

A program of the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation, Peers for Progress is dedicated to promoting peer support in health, health care and prevention around the world. Through research, collaborative sharing of program and quality improvement resources, and supporting advocacy, it seeks to help the thousands of peer support programs around the world learn from each other, improve the services they offer, gain greater recognition of their work, and achieve integration of peer support as a normal, widely available component of high-quality health care. Peers for Progress is supported by grants from the Eli Lilly and Company Foundation and the Bristol Myers Squibb Foundation's Together on Diabetes Initiative. For more information on Peers for Progress, visit [www.peersforprogress.org](http://www.peersforprogress.org), or follow us on Twitter at [@peers4progress](https://twitter.com/peers4progress).

### **About the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation**

The Foundation serves as the philanthropic arm of the American Academy of Family Physicians. Its primary mission is to advance the values of family medicine by promoting humanitarian, educational, and scientific initiatives that improve the health of all people.

For more information, please visit [www.aafpfoundation.org](http://www.aafpfoundation.org).

#### **About the Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative**

Founded in 2006, the [Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative](#) (PCPCC) is a not-for-profit membership organization dedicated to advancing an effective and efficient health system built on a strong foundation of primary care and the patient-centered medical home. The PCPCC achieves its mission through the work of its five [Stakeholder Centers](#), led by experts and thought leaders dedicated to transforming the U.S. health care system through delivery reform, payment reform, patient engagement, and benefit redesign. Today, PCPCC's membership has grown to over 1,200 diverse stakeholder organizations who represent health care providers across the care continuum, payers and purchasers, and patients and their families.

#### **About the National Council of La Raza (NCLR)**

NCLR—the largest national Hispanic civil rights and advocacy organization in the United States—works to improve opportunities for Hispanic Americans. For more information on NCLR, please visit [www.nclr.org](http://www.nclr.org), or follow along on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).



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