

# BWH Bulletin

*For and about the People of Brigham and Women's Hospital*

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## **The Impact of PACT**



As part of PACT, directly observed therapy specialist Cristina Suarez, left, visits with a patient at home to ensure she takes her medication.

During the past decade, approximately 70 percent of HIV/AIDS patients participating in BWH's PACT program have reversed the course of their disease. The Dorchester-based Prevention and Access to Care and Treatment project supports some of the city's poorest HIV/AIDS patients with home visits from community health workers who help patients deal with issues like depression, domestic violence, substance abuse and financial difficulties that prevent them from taking their medications and managing their disease.

Word has spread about the impact of PACT, and health care organizations around the country are trying to replicate the program.

"PACT is about empowerment and giving patients the tools to survive," said Erin George, special projects coordinator of PACT, a part of the Division of Social Medicine and Health Inequalities. "It's really exciting to have these dialogues with hospitals that are interested in PACT. It has grown significantly in the past few years, and this interest in replication speaks to the need for programs like it."

The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene was among the first to contact PACT. "They were intrigued by our model and put forward their own funding, which public hospitals bid for," explained Heidi Behforouz, MD, executive director of PACT. "Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx received the funding and is piloting a program."

If Lincoln's implementation of the PACT model is successful, it will be piloted at other hospitals in New York.

Just last week, a group from Jackson Memorial Hospital in Miami visited Boston to shadow PACT's six health promoters and four directly observed therapy specialists as they visited patients at home in and around Boston.

PACT also has received interest from health clinics in Virginia and South Carolina, among others. "This model attempts to set standards for how community health workers are recruited, supervised and supported to deliver sophisticated and complementary home-based intervention," Behforouz said. "We hope to continue to interest hospitals, clinics and AIDS service organizations in adapting the model because it is very effective for chronic disease patients dealing with a variety of health and social challenges."

In Dorchester, the PACT team is working on expanding the program model of home-based intervention with diabetes patients who are not managing their disease successfully because of both individual and structural barriers—obstacles similar to the ones facing PACT's HIV patients. The diabetes initiative will be piloted next year in collaboration with the Codman Square Health Center.

For more information on PACT, visit [www.brighamandwomens.org/socialmedicine/pact.aspx](http://www.brighamandwomens.org/socialmedicine/pact.aspx)