

## PATIENT-CENTERED CARE AND COMMUNITY HEALTH

**Building Trust and Equity Through Patient-Centered  
Community Care****Iluminada “MILES” Regalado Eguia, MAN, RN  
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*Ms. Miles Regalado Eguia completed her Bachelor of Science in Nursing in March 1996 and her Master of Arts in Nursing with a focus on Research Study with Latin honors on September 4, 2025. She is now working on her Master of Hospital Administration at Saint Bernadette College of Lourdes in Quezon City. She hopes to finish in July 2026. She is a devoted healthcare worker who serves as a Charge Nurse and places a strong emphasis on patient-centered care and community health. As a Discharge Coordinator in the OBGYN inpatient unit, she leads and supports the team, helps midwife advisors expand and promote maternal health services, and ensures patient satisfaction by coordinating VIP tours, managing feedback, and following up on patient concerns. She has been part of new projects such as the King’s Baby Step campaign, which promotes digital health literacy and antenatal education. She is passionate about making health education more accessible and using technology to improve maternity and child health services. She works well in diverse, multicultural teams and is dedicated to providing comprehensive, individualized, and high-quality treatment. Ms. Eguia is a highly skilled nurse known for her leadership and clinical expertise. Since the DAISY Award Committee was formed at King’s College Hospital, she has been a member. In May 2021, she was named Best Nurse of the Year. She has also finished the Emerging Leadership Course at King’s College Hospital.*

*She has worked at several places, starting as a Staff Nurse at Al Khazan Medical Clinic from 2000 to 2006. After that, she worked as a Charge Nurse at Al Ain Hospital from 2007 to 2014 and as a Staff Nurse at Sheikh Khalifa General Hospital from 2014 to 2021. She is still committed to providing high-quality, patient-centered care, guided by her belief that “Empowering Health Care via Compassion, Coordination, and Clinical Expertise.”*

## What is Patient-Centered Community Care?

The concept of Patient-Centered Care (PCC) places importance on the patient, with the patient's needs, wants, and values at the center of that care. PCC provides a larger framework than just the traditional way of practicing medicine, as it includes not only the physical Health but also the Emotional/Social aspects of an individual's Health. One aspect of PCC is the Service Provider's ability to create "Partnerships" within the healthcare community through community involvement. Creating partnerships with members of the community (local residents) through the development and delivery of Health Services helps ensure that those Services are designed to meet the needs of that local Community. The end result will be that all healthcare service providers deliver services as accessible and effective as possible, because of the Continuous engagement of Community Members in developing Health Services.

Trust and Equity play a central role in delivering PCC. Trust establishes the foundation for communication and collaboration between the patient and the Healthcare Service Provider, leading to positive Health Outcomes. The patient must feel that he/she is respected and a valued member of the healthcare team and, as such, will share information that is critical to providing care. Enhanced Trust between the two parties promotes Equity in Healthcare Services by bringing more voices and perspectives into Healthcare Services and thereby benefiting various Marginalized Groups by ensuring they are included and receive resources (Walsh et al., 2022).

The best way to promote equity and enhance the patient experience is to build a strong trust relationship with the potential patient. So, as we discuss Trust's role in healthcare roles, we will better understand how trust affects the patient experience and the patient's overall health outcome(s), and we will keep in perspective that developing a community-centered provider will create an equitable environment for healthcare (Walsh et al., 2022).



As another example, integrating mental health services into primary care settings illustrates the Communities approach and how it is PCC (Menear et al., 2024). Trust plays an important role in forming relationships between providers and patients. Trust influences patient experiences and outcomes and affects patients when they seek healthcare services. When a patient trusts a healthcare provider, the patient is more willing to engage and be honest about their symptoms and desires, leading to a more accurate diagnosis/appropriate treatment plan tailored to the individual patient's needs. Creating and maintaining this trust requires consistent, respectful interactions between healthcare providers and patients, prioritizing communication and active listening.

The correlations between high levels of trust and positive patient health outcomes are well established. The 2023 research of a large group of patients in New York City found a significant increase in treatment compliance, attendance at follow-up appointments, and satisfaction levels when patients viewed their providers as high-trust. In addition, through case studies of community health initiatives, we see that when patients and healthcare providers create trusting relationships, patients increase their utilization of preventive healthcare services. These relationships foster reframing, in which patients believe they can access care and be treated with respect and dignity, resulting in better patient health management.

Additionally, trust affects health equity. Historically, many underserved populations have created barriers to access because of a historical mistrust of the healthcare system and ongoing disparities. The ongoing problem of Equity in access to healthcare services, previously faced by many communities, persists, with barriers to healthcare services among populations disproportionately affected.

Socioeconomic status, geographic location, and systemic barriers created by the healthcare system discrimination create barriers to access for individuals. For instance, a person living in poverty would have

numerous barriers in accessing healthcare services (i.e., limited transport options and out-of-pocket expenses associated with accessing care).

In addition, rural communities have higher rates of provider shortages, which lead to longer wait times and fewer choices for accessing care. Given that inequity in access to healthcare is a common occurrence across communities, the best approach to increase equity is to develop locally derived solutions by the members of the respective community. One example of a locally designed solution for healthcare access is the mobile health clinic. Through mobile health clinics, healthcare services are delivered directly to individuals in regions not served by traditional healthcare access points, eliminating transportation barriers for patients seeking to engage with the healthcare system.

Finally, several successful campaigns have been designed to increase community members' knowledge of healthcare benefits. As a result of these successful campaigns, community members have learned to identify and use existing healthcare resources to enroll in healthcare programs.

In summary, successful solutions that overcome immediate barriers to access and establish ongoing relationships with community members are critical to developing culturally appropriate and responsive healthcare service delivery systems for diverse populations. Additionally, the strategies described in the next sections of this report will provide insight into the importance of community engagement strategies and the value of developing relationships with community members to build equitable access to the healthcare system. Moreover, establishing these relationships will facilitate the creation of strategic partnerships that furnish healthcare systems with the instruments necessary to adapt to the specific challenges faced by their patients.

## **Community Engagement Strategies as an Integral Component of Health System Development**

Community engagement is widely recognized as fundamental component of modern health system development. It influences how health system evolves, adapt and respond to the need of the populations they serve. Health systems become more equitable, resilient, and responsive.

Health systems must include community input as a critical element of their development. The development of effective health systems relies heavily on community input. "Community engagement strategies should be considered as part of the overall strategy for improving the health of the community and for ensuring that healthcare providers continue to provide care to individuals who may not be able to access care otherwise. If the community provides input, the healthcare provider has a much greater understanding of the issue(s) affecting the community's health and therefore can better serve that community" (Dasari et al., 2024).

### **Community Health Worker Programs**

Community health workers (CHWs) are recognized as a best practice for promoting health equity by increasing access to preventive care services. CHWs are employed within communities and represent the communities they serve. By engaging with the community, CHWs can develop relationships with residents and address barriers that may prevent community members from seeking preventive care. Through their work, CHWs have established trusted relationships with the people they serve and can be valuable resources for bridging the gap between health care providers and their patients, ensuring that services are available, culturally competent, and relevant to their target population.

Leveraging Technology to Improve Community Engagement: Technology has also introduced greater opportunities for healthcare providers to engage with their communities. Many healthcare providers are now using social media platforms, mobile health applications, and telehealth systems to reach a larger audience and communicate with their communities in real time. These technologies enable healthcare providers to communicate and receive feedback immediately and respond to the evolving needs of their communities based on this feedback.

Successful patient-centered care models developed through community engagement strategies reflect the relationships established between healthcare providers and the communities they serve. Patient-centered care models not only provide improved access and increased trust but also serve as a foundation for the development of sustainable healthcare services that are culturally appropriate for the diverse populations they serve. These examples demonstrate how patient-centered approaches can be effectively integrated into clinical practice on an ongoing basis.

### **Successful examples of Patient-Centered Approaches**

Between 2023 and 2026, examples of successful approaches to patient-centered healthcare were collected from retrospective analyses of recent studies that address many problems related to equal treatment and access to healthcare. In one case, a community health project in rural areas resulted in the design of services specifically to meet the unique needs of families, with local providers actively collaborating with those families. The project held regular Health Forums for families and other community members to voice their health needs and identify specific healthcare service gaps. The result of this effort was the development of a mobile health unit to serve families without access to traditional providers. Open lines of communication between providers and the families they serve, as well as allowing families to provide input into the development of



healthcare services, are essential components of building trust and encouraging families to seek care when services are available.

Implementation of patient-centered community care often faces numerous barriers that limit its effectiveness. One of the largest barriers to the successful implementation of patient-centered community care is the inadequate resources available in underserved areas, which suffer from limitations in funding and personnel. Limited funding and personnel prevent healthcare providers from effectively integrating with communities and, therefore, do not provide tailored services to patients that would give them the greatest opportunity for success. Health literacy among community members also impacts their participation in their care. When individuals are unable to comprehend their health status and services available to them, it limits the likelihood that individuals will actively engage in their own healthcare activities; thus, creating decreases in trust, equity, and empowerment within the system.

Strategies to overcome these barriers include: providing focused training to healthcare providers to improve their community engagement and health education skills. Training in community engagement and health education will improve a healthcare provider's ability to communicate with patients in an inclusive and effective manner, which, in turn, will promote and strengthen the relationship between a provider and their patients. Establishing partnerships between healthcare providers and local organizations will help to fill the resource gaps and improve outreach to communities.

### **Reflection-In-Action**

Throughout my career I actively contributed my expertise in Maternal and Childcare. These experiences allowed me to connect closely with expectant families. Being able to truly understand their concerns and help make maternity information more accessible. These interactions evolve my personal growth. I received meaningful feedback from families and



colleagues that reinforced the importance of compassionate, community-focused care and integration.

I felt motivated and proud in my contribution in community engagement since it aligns with my strength in communication and personal connection. I also felt the responsibility to ensure that the information shared is culturally sensitive “Arabic”/Islamic Country and unbiased. Hearing comments such as “*Your explanation made everything feel less scary*” and “*A ray of sunshine*” coming for those first-time mums contributes to their confidence. The given patient confidence supported a lot to reinforce the impact of empathetic communication.

I have come to realize that “compassion, coordination, and clinical expertise” are the foundation of patient-focused community care. Each position I have held reinforces the belief that quality healthcare must not only address the physical needs but also the emotional, educational, and social aspects of health. I am committed to serving my patients and community and to providing individualized, holistic, and quality care that makes a real difference, guided by my vision “*Empowering Health Care through Compassion, Coordination and Clinical Expertise*”.