



## National contract funds research to connect patients with resources to improve health

Many patients need more than just great medical care to get healthy or stay healthy. They need a holistic approach to their overall health, including help with challenges such as social isolation, a less-than-healthy diet, or lack of exercise.

Through its Learning to Integrate Neighborhoods and Clinical Care (LINCC) project, Group Health Research Institute (GHRI) is now designing and testing new methods for connecting patients in primary care with the community resources they need to become healthier.

The project is funded by a contract from the [Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute \(PCORI\)](#), a nonprofit organization authorized by Congress in 2010 as part of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). Its mission is to fund research that will provide patients, caregivers, and clinicians with the evidence-based information they need to make better-informed health care decisions. This mission aligns well with that of [GHRI](#), which focuses on practical research that helps people everywhere stay healthy and get the care they need.

In late 2012, funding for the LINCC project was one of two contracts GHRI received from PCORI. There were only 25 primary research contracts awarded that year, and 500 applicants. In 2013, the Institute received five additional PCORI contracts (see sidebar, [page 12](#)).

“The objective of the LINCC initiative is to prevent chronic disease, avoid overuse of medical care, and improve patients’ health,” says Clarissa Hsu, PhD, GHRI medical anthropologist and LINCC project lead.

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## Helping kids develop healthy habits is the goal of soccer camp sponsorship

Giving kids a chance to learn about the joy—and lifelong health benefits—of exercise is one of the objectives of Group Health’s co-sponsorship of the [Seattle Sounders FC Summer Camps for kids](#). Now in its fourth year, our sponsorship will help provide soccer camps for some 6,500 youth aged 4–18 in regions around the state, from Olympia to Bellingham, and from Silverdale to Spokane.

Group Health is presenting the camps with adidas®. We’re also offering 15 full scholarships, 20 percent off on camp registration for 75 campers, and Group Health backpacks as giveaways for all campers.

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### Collaboration is key to LINCC initiative

In addition to its goal of connecting patients with community resources, the LINCC project is testing new methods of involving patients in deciding what services are needed, and how best to provide them. In February of this year, the project held a four-day workshop that brought together 12 patients and 11 staff members to design a new service that will help patients in primary care better connect with resources in their communities.

“Patients and staff collaborated on coming up with ways to provide a holistic approach to patients’ overall health—brainstorming, writing scenarios, role playing, and ultimately detailing a clinic process that includes a new role, the community resources specialist (CRS) at Group Health Medical Centers clinics,” says Dr. Hsu.



Group Health will begin piloting the CRS role at two Group Health Medical Centers locations this month. The CRS will link patients and clinics with community organizations, such as the YMCA or local support groups, and help create lasting relationships between them.

“Initially, the study will involve evaluating how effectively the new service is implemented, if patients find the service valuable, and the impact that the service has on patients’ behaviors. That research will be completed by 2015,” says Dr. Hsu. “The next phase of the study will involve assessing the health outcomes of linking patients with community resources, and that will take much longer.” ●

## Group Health claims seven PCORI contracts

In addition to funding Group Health Research Institute’s (GHRI) Learning to Integrate Neighborhoods and Clinical Care (LINCC) project, the national Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute (PCORI) has funded six other Group Health projects in the last two years—for a total of almost \$8 million in contracts. They include:

- **Breast cancer surveillance**  
A study into whether breast MRIs are more effective than mammograms in screening breast-cancer survivors for new signs of the disease.
- **Chronic opioid use**  
Research into reducing the risks of drug addiction and overdose related to chronic opioid use in controlling pain.
- **Asthma in minority populations**  
Research into ways to improve health outcomes for people with asthma who are members of racial minorities.
- **Long-term back pain**  
Development and testing of a tool for determining which patients are at risk for long-term back pain and which evidence-based treatments are most likely to help them.
- **National data networks**  
Two separate PCORI contracts have funded Group Health’s involvement in developing national health data networks that will provide researchers with access to diverse health information to support a wide range of studies.



## Dr. Tarnoff is selected to lead GHP



*Steve Tarnoff, MD  
President and Chief  
Medical Executive, GHP*

Last month, the Group Health Physicians (GHP) Board of Directors selected Steve Tarnoff, MD, as the next GHP president and chief medical executive. The announcement caps an extensive national search to name a successor to Michael Soman, MD, who is retiring at the end of June.

Dr. Tarnoff has served in a variety of positions at Group Health. His roles have included chief of Consultative Specialty Care Services, chief of Central Region Primary Care, and medical director of the Group Practice. Most recently, he has overseen medical operations and quality, and led complex cost repositioning work as the executive medical director of the Group Practice Division (GPD)—a role he will also continue for the foreseeable future.

In addition to serving as the president of GHP, Dr. Tarnoff will serve as the top medical advisor for Group Health Cooperative. In this role, he'll collaborate closely with President and CEO Scott Armstrong, and Executive Vice President of the GPD Mark Szalwinski.

"I am humbled and honored by the opportunity to serve our patients, members, and my colleagues," says Dr. Tarnoff. "My life's work has been dedicated to helping Group Health fulfill its mission and potential, and I'm eager to work closely with the GHP Board and my Group Health Cooperative colleagues to address our challenges and to maximize the many opportunities that lie before us." ●

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"We're committed to promoting healthy habits that lead to better health, and to helping reverse the trend of childhood obesity," says Kris Greco Thompson, director, External Relations. "Encouraging kids to develop a love of exercise early in life is a great way to do that."

The soccer camps are just one of the healthy activities we sponsor each year, many of which benefit health-oriented causes. In the

coming months these include the Group Health STP bike ride, Seattle to Portland, July 12–13; 8 Lakes Leg Aches bike ride in Spokane, Aug. 2; the Walk to Defeat ALS in Seattle, Sept. 13; and numerous Relay for Life events that benefit the American Cancer Society.

For a complete list of events, go to [Group Health–Sponsored Community Events](#). ●

