

PATHWAYS TO WELLNESS

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About the Agency

Pathways to Wellness (Pathways) is a national model for equal access to high quality holistic care. For 20 years, Pathways has addressed the health care needs of low-income and chronically and terminally ill individuals from diverse demographic and socio-economic backgrounds throughout Massachusetts. Pathways provides 12,000 affordable acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, and shiatsu bodywork treatments each year to 3,000 Massachusetts patients who would otherwise not have access to such treatments. Pathways' unique "Share-the-Care" business model allows clients who pay market rate for their treatments to help support the agency's mission simply by becoming patients.

Pathways began in 1988 in response to the AIDS crisis. Twelve years later, in 2000, the agency expanded its services beyond HIV/AIDS to make holistic therapies available to everyone at low rates. Although practicing ancient arts, Pathways was ahead of its time when it shifted toward a model of social enterprise and expanded services to paying clients, which now provides a substantial portion of the annual budget. The expansion allowed the agency to generate revenue while also bringing its understanding of chronic illness to the broader population.

In 2006, Pathways began a new partnership with the South End Community Health Center, and moved its practice to 1601 Washington Street, in Boston's South End. Pathways also operates seven satellite programs at other community health centers. The organization has an operating budget of \$1 million and provides more than \$250,000 in free care each year.

Pathways uses holistic therapies to help people

Pathways' holistic therapies can be divided into three main categories: acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, and Asian bodywork.

Acupuncture: Developed over 3,000 years ago in China, acupuncture treatments help boost the body's immune system, maintain energy, control pain, and treat the side effects of medications and the symptoms of many conditions. The acupuncturist uses hair-thin, sterile, disposable needles that are gently inserted at specific points to enhance the body's self-healing processes. Cost for a full hour treatment starts as low as \$15 per session.

Chinese Herbal Medicine: Herbal medicine is the foundation of the Chinese medical system. Pathways' Chinese Herbal Clinic stocks over 200 herbs, which are used in various combinations to promote a more balanced and healthy system. Herbalists are trained to evaluate and prescribe the correct combination of herbs for each individual to address specific issues. Herbal consults are 45 minutes and start at \$10 plus the cost of herbs.

Asian Bodywork: Asian bodywork treatments combine palm and finger pressure with rotation and stretching of the limbs to stimulate healing, disperse muscular stagnation, and bring the body back into balance. Sessions are gentle and relaxing or vigorous and deep, depending on the condition and preference of the client. Treatment does not require disrobing.

Pathways to Wellness is open to everyone, but has several specialty programs targeted to specific populations:

- The Veterans Community Acupuncture Program offers free acupuncture for veterans;
- The AIDS Care Project offers free acupuncture for HIV+ patients;
- The Cancer Care Project offers



A clinician at Pathways to Wellness performs shiatsu massage on a client. The organization also uses acupuncture treatments, Chinese herbal medicine and Asian bodywork to help clients.

chemotherapy side effects support in hospitals, home care settings, and the main clinic on Washington Street;

- The Fertility Enhancement Program works with the body, mind and spirit to enhance fertility of both women and men to support healthy pregnancy and delivery;
- The Integrative Pediatric Program uses gentle, non-needle acupuncture techniques to treat ADD/ADHD, asthma and other health issues in infants, children and adolescents;
- The Refugee Program offers free acupuncture for Cambodian refugees at Lynn Community Health Center;
- The Home Care Program provides specialty home care to patients who are para- and quadriplegic, have cerebral palsy, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, or HIV/AIDS. It is also available to the general public.
- Win Win Hands On is a massage program for Latina girls at risk for diabetes; and
- Mente y Cuerpo is an acupuncture and massage program for Latina women.

Executive Director

Kristen E. Porter has been the executive director of Pathways to Wellness since 2002. She began her career at Pathways as a volunteer in 1990, and later served as the organization's clinical director for seven years.



Porter holds a master's degree in acupuncture from the New England School of Acupuncture (NESAs), a Bachelor of Science in business from the Boston University School of Management, and a post-graduate certificate from BU's Institute of Nonprofit Management and Leadership. She is an adjunct professor at NESAs, where she teaches Business Development and Practice Management and serves on the Board of Medicine's Committee on Acupuncture. Porter has served as a co-investigator on research studies on the efficacy of acupuncture and is a columnist for the national publication, *Acupuncture Today*. She has published more than 30 papers and abstracts.

During her nearly 20 years with the agency, Porter has developed a majority of the integrative medicine programs used in the state. She has acted as the lead visionary for acupuncture programs that combine treatments for infectious disease, oncology, fertility and home-based care.

Her vision for the next 20 years of Pathways is "to continue to treat accessibly, educate broadly, and advocate tirelessly to ensure that holistic medicine and integrated health care is a right for all, and not just a privilege for a few."