

December 2024

Dear Friends and Supporters:

This missive marks a milestone for the Health Equity Institute: our first quarterly newsletter to you, the ones who help make it all happen.

Since HEI was established in April of 2022, I am delighted to report that we have been growing in leaps and bounds. During our first two years, HEI undertook an informative initial pilot study offering pro bono advocacy to patients in need, serving select low-income clients with Type 2 diabetes, cancer and other complex medical illnesses. Clients HEI supported shared with us that advocacy helped them become better educated about their illness, better understand their options, feel listened to, and reduced their worry about addressing healthcare issues. Sara, the daughter of one client we served, wrote to us:

"I don't have enough words to express my gratitude to the Health Equity Institute. Because of their powerful support and kind care, our situation changed from struggles to excellent care. I hope one day I can give back to the Health Equity Institute. We got to the point of receiving high respect instead of stress. Thank you so much—your kindness is printed on my heart and my dad's forever..."

In 2024, we organized five presentations on health equity issues. We spoke at Medford Community Center's Black Health series; we offered talks about self-advocacy and how to advocate for family members to senior groups, physicians, patient advocates and patients. Our [library panel](#), **Navigating a personal health crisis: the role of patient advocacy**, featured Health Equity Compact's Magnolia Contreras, who discussed her advocacy work for low-income and minority populations at the Dana Farber Cancer Institute and independent health advocate Ardell Otten, who spoke about her pro bono advocacy. Wellesley professor emerita and HEI board member Corrine Taylor shared the moving story of her personal journey with metastatic breast cancer.

Remarkably, we were able to achieve all this on a budget of less than \$10,000—which shows how much each contribution counts. We greatly appreciate our early backers: your financial support and knowing you value our work kept us going during this formative time.

Thank you for joining us on our voyage. We have innovative ideas and ambitious goals — but our success depends on you. Your donation, however large or small, will enable us to continue this vital mission. Please spread the word to those in need and those who may be able to help.

With gratitude,



Dr. Brita Lundberg, HEI Founder and President

[DONATE HERE](#)

HEI's Mission: offering advocacy to patients in need *regardless of ability to pay*.

GOALS for 2025 and Beyond

HEI is working to double our scope and impact. We know that our dreams exceed our abilities, but for 2025, we plan to:

1. Increase our visibility

To extend our visibility and reach, HEI will schedule presentations on improving self-advocacy skills throughout the Boston Area to inform patients, health care facilities and other advocates about our work. Some of the main groups we are scheduled to or hope to address include:

- Low-income communities
- Church groups
- Health care facilities
- Health care providers
- Assisted living centers and nursing homes and
- Group homes

Please invite HEI or contact us if you know of a group that may gain from learning more about our work.

2. Launch a student internship program

HEI plans to mentor one or more students who can assist in and learn from our work. Student interns will be encouraged to choose or take charge of a research project related to health equity. For 2025, HEI is delighted to welcome Astri Horsburgh, who will draw on her experience as a CDC Public Health Advisor in disaster preparedness to help HEI define this year's "systems change" issue: **Disaster Preparedness and Health: the importance of securing medical supply chains**. This program will focus on how local communities can prepare for natural disasters like wildfires and flooding; it will be specifically tailored to address the needs of disproportionately affected low-income communities and communities of color.

3. Expand collaborations with like-minded groups and individuals with similar missions

Working together lightens the load and doubles our achievements. HEI currently appreciates our partnerships and synergy with *Health Equity Compact, Massachusetts Coalition for Serious Illness Care, Medford Community Center and Health Law Advocates*. We intend to significantly expand this network over the next year.

4. Expand and distribute our patient resource materials

HEI will continue to update and expand upon the Patient Resources offered on our website. We also intend to reproduce and distribute these educational materials more broadly in digital and conventional form (flyers and brochures). Content includes:

- Presentations explaining **advocacy**: the nuts and bolts of advocating for yourself and working with and locating needed resources including health advocates
- **Pro bono advocacy resources** for both accessing medical care and navigating insurance issues
- Explanation of what a **Health Proxy** does and how to choose one
- The importance of **Support Groups** and how to find one

5. Continue to develop the [HEI Website](#) as an educational tool. Check back often to find:

- Overview of HEI
- Advocacy and [Educational Resources](#)
- Basic healthcare Information
- Current events
- Links to local experts
- HEI blog
- Opportunity to [Donate](#)

6. Continue to expand our HEI Board

Our Board of Directors currently consists of 5 individuals with unique skills and passions. You can read about us [here](#).

Brita Lundberg, MD, *Founder and Chair*

Julia Bandini, *Secretary*

Catherine Lee, *Treasurer*

Corrine Taylor, *Board Member*

Tanya Wojtowych, *Board Member*

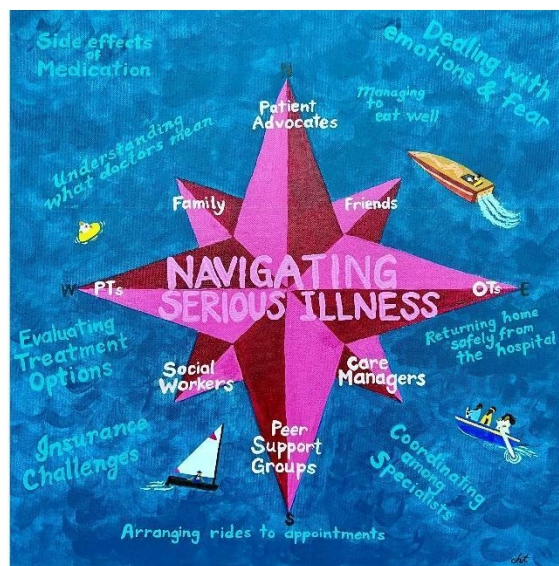
This month, we would like to highlight the work of:

CORRINE TAYLOR

*Artist, Cancer Survivor, Professor and
HEI Board Member*

Corrine is an amazing individual who enriches HEI on many levels. Reviewing her contributions is an excellent means of introducing you to HEI in a more personal and specific manner.

Corrine understands health advocacy from personal experience. She shares her own journey in the first HEI [Blog](#), “*Helpers in Being Your Own Best Patient Advocate*”, which you can find on our website.



Corrine also created a most beautiful compass rose that symbolizes our work, in the hope that it may inspire and guide those facing turbulent times during a health crisis. We are proud to have Corrine on the HEI Team and grateful for her health, her wisdom and her gifts.

Words of Encouragement

Nothing is more valuable than hearing that our work is valuable. We highlight this comment from one patient whose advocacy experience HEI supported:

“Authentic honest advocacy: HEI is a very powerful service that has the ability to help me understand the treatment and communicate with doctors thoroughly. I highly recommend...I give them an A+ rating. Exceeded expectations! I am deeply grateful for the kindness and care I received. The access to quality medical care HEI provided without cost means a lot to me. Your generosity has made a real difference!”

*****We wish you and yours the happiest of holidays, and invite you to support HEI's work in 2025!*****