

Puget Sound Health Alliance Online Consumer Survey
February 24, 2006 – March 21, 2006

Respondents - 2,879

Sex - 69% female; 31% male

Age - 82% ages 35 to 64; 62% ages 45 to 74

Location - 61% from King County; 17% from Pierce County; 13% from Snohomish County; 4% from other counties; 3% from Kitsap County; 3% from Thurston County

Insured - 95% have employer-sponsored health insurance or COBRA

The Results

What We Heard From Consumers Nearly 2,900 people from the five-county area completed the survey. Sixty-nine percent were female, 82% were between ages 35 and 64, with 62% from the 45-74 age category. Ninety-five percent reported having employer-sponsored health insurance or COBRA. Sixty-four percent had not heard of the Alliance. This was a fairly undifferentiated sample: answers to questions did not vary significantly based on gender, health status, age, geography, or interest in the Alliance.

Access to needed information? Consumers say they have access to the information they need overall: 80% say they have the information they need to make “the best health care decisions for myself and my family members.” 87% say they have information they need about “how to make healthy lifestyle decisions.” 88% said “I left with clear instructions and understood what I was to do next” at a recent visit to the doctor. The issue then becomes what will motivate them to apply that information. When asked about *specific types* of information, half or less feel that they have good information on how to find the best doctors in the area, how to find the best treatments for a specific disease or condition, and how to find the best hospitals in the area. Over 130 wrote in responses, many stating interest in quality ratings that include patient satisfaction.

Comparison of clinics and hospitals? Consumers liked the idea of a report that would compare physician clinics and hospitals in the region. Nearly all (95%) said a comparison report is a “very important” or “somewhat important” priority for the Alliance, and 94% said a comparison of local providers “definitely” or “might” influence them when choosing a hospital or physician.

Cost of health insurance? Most consumers (67%) said the cost of health insurance for *themselves* is reasonable, but 77% said that a primary focus of the Alliance should be lowering cost of health insurance and 33% said cost is fine to them, but they are concerned about others. There were 257 write-in responses to this question, many of which highlighted their concern about what will happen in the future when they retire.

Trusted sources for information? Consumers trust information from and are influenced *most* by their own physician. They trust media the *least* and are least likely to be influenced by media information. Other sources of trusted information include: disease-related associations (63%), medical journals (54%) and health websites (51%).

High level of interest from consumers The response to the survey indicated a high level of consumer interest in the work of the Alliance. Over 700 said they are interested in joining or receiving regular updates from the Alliance.

Additional Consumer Interests Over 500 consumers wrote in detailed comments. Themes were:

- ✓ Broadening coverage for and increasing awareness of preventive care and alternative medicine;
- ✓ Better access and better insurance for people living in poverty;
- ✓ Concern about influence and power of pharmaceutical companies and the cost of prescription drugs; and,
- ✓ Concern about affordable care during retirement.

Opinions shared with the Alliance are based on the health system as it is now structured, the degree to which useful comparative information is available, complexity or inconsistency in system incentives, and the level of awareness of the purpose of the Alliance. Over time, we expect perceptions to change as health care measurement, reporting and reward systems are improved.

This online consumer opinion research was conducted by the Health Alliance in February and March 2006. While nearly 2,900 people in the region filled out the survey, the respondents were not a random sample in the traditional sense that guarantees with full statistical confidence that the results accurately represent the views of all consumers.