



Update to the Community

June 5, 2008

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Dear Community Member

I am thrilled to report that we have received another major grant, this one worth \$1 million over three years, from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to support our work. This honor serves as a testament to our success and ongoing commitment to improve health care quality and affordability in the Puget Sound area (details below!).

Also, in this, my last Update to you as Executive Director of the Alliance, I want to share some excerpts from the final remarks I made to the Alliance Board at its May 27 meeting:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to do this job. It has been the best job I've ever had-which is not to diminish the great experiences I had working for my former employers who are represented on this Board-Group Health, Premera, Regence, and the Health Care Authority. But there is something about the collaborative nature of the Alliance that has been very inspiring and rewarding to me.

I am proud of what we collectively have accomplished in the last three years, through the hard work of the hundreds of volunteers who have served on our committees, our outstanding staff, two great board chairs, Ron Sims and Dr. David Fleming; and all of you. We delivered the first Community Checkup report and it was received well. We have studied the major chronic health conditions, prevention, and prescription drugs, and made our recommendations on how purchasers, health plans, health care professionals, and patients can take action to improve quality. We have about 170 organizations that have joined the Alliance as well as 50 individuals. We have earned a good reputation, both in the Puget Sound region and nationally. We have become the place to come in our community to have the discussion about health care.

I am leaving you with every confidence that you will succeed. Mary McWilliams is a great choice as your new Executive Director. She will build on our foundation and take you to new heights. Mary's first day at the Alliance will be June 23.

Thank you again for the opportunity to do this rewarding work. I wish you all the best.

Regards,

Margaret Stanley

Read on for more news about the Alliance.

To find out more about joining the Alliance, go to the [sign-up page on our website](#).

Progress At-A-Glance

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Thanks to the hard work of the Board, committees, workgroups, volunteers and staff, the Alliance continues to make progress, including:

- **Received a second three-year grant to participate in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's expanded Aligning Forces for Quality project.** The Alliance is one of 14 communities that will each receive more than \$1 million over three years to continue work in public reporting, health quality improvement and engaging patients and other health care consumers. The next phase of the grant will also emphasize addressing disparities in health care and partnering with nurses to improve hospital care.
- **Hired quality assessment expert Karen Onstad to be the next Director of Health Information.** For the past eight years, Karen has worked as an independent consultant on projects that include assisting Minnesota Community Measurement with the development of patient experience measures, developing performance measures and products for the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA), and authoring a research brief on racial/ethnic disparities in Consumer Assessment of Healthcare Providers and Systems (CAHPS) data. She worked for NCQA from 1995 through 1999 as a project manager and subsequently as director of Policy and Product Development. Karen starts at the Alliance on June 16.
- **Identified priorities for upcoming health plan site visits** in connection with eValue8, a program of the National Business Coalition on Health (NBCH) that allows purchasers to evaluate health plans based on national guidelines and standards. The six participating health plans submitted their information to NBCH for scoring and then 10 participating purchasers reviewed the scores to identify targeted areas for improvement. Site visits are scheduled for the week of June 16.
- **Participated in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Aligning Forces for Quality annual meeting** in Amelia Island, Florida. Board Chair Dr. David Fleming presented on our Community Checkup report, and staff and other Alliance representatives gave talks on cross-cultural communication and health literacy.

**Want to find out more?** *Keep reading!*

### IMPORTANT REMINDER TO CLINICS: Your Participation Needed for Next Report

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The second Community Checkup report is in development, and it's time for each clinic to update roster information in OneHealthPort by July 1, 2008. By getting involved, your clinic will be able to make sure the information about your clinic is as current as possible; and you will have the chance to review the draft Community Checkup report results for your clinic before the results are finalized and made public. The report will show results for all clinics in King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish, and Thurston counties with

6 or more clinicians (including Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants) in a number of specialties (go to www.onehealthport.com/services/communitycheckup for the detailed list).

To help ensure that the next Community Checkup appropriately reflects your clinic structure, and to have the opportunity to review and respond to draft results about your clinic in advance, go to www.onehealthport.com/services/communitycheckup for complete instructions.

Questions? Contact Natasha Rosenblatt at 206.448.2570 x123; or email nrosenblatt@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org.

Current and Upcoming Events and Opportunities

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**The 2008 Northwest Patient Safety Conference** - "Patient Safety in Transition" will be Thursday, June 12 from 8:00 am - 5:00 pm at the Hilton Seattle Airport & Conference Center. To register and for more information, including how to submit a poster, visit the Coalition's web page: [www.wapatientssafety.org](http://www.wapatientssafety.org)

**Helping Employees Stop Smoking - Washington Quits!** and The Washington Association of Health Underwriters presents "Major League Education and Baseball" on Wednesday, August 6 at Safeco Field. Boeing's Wellness Program Director talks about how and why his company developed one of the most robust stop-smoking programs in the nation. Presentations begin at 8:30 a.m.; Mariners vs. Twins at 1:30 p.m. To register, go to: <https://asi-seattle.com/agent/wahu-baseball/register.php>

For the latest on upcoming events and opportunities, visit the [events page](#) on the Alliance website.

### Health News

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Aggressive Hospital Care Might Not be Best Care

When it comes to hospital health care, more isn't necessarily better, says Consumer Reports, which has published a free Web tool allowing patients to compare the intensity of care given at hospitals around the country. More aggressive care can result in an increased risk of infection, medical errors and uncoordinated care, says the report. In the Seattle area, hospitals treated patients much less aggressively than did hospitals in some other large cities, such as Los Angeles, New York and Miami. But the report still showed a large variation here, from hospital to hospital, in the care received. *The Seattle Times, May 30, 2008* [Read more](#)

More Health Care May Not Always be Better: Study finds extra treatment can mean extra risks, costs

Too much medical care could be harmful to your health. That's what researchers concluded after examining the nations' hospitals and the care patients receive. Some hospitals and some areas of the country give patients more aggressive care -- meaning more tests, longer hospital stays and more procedures -- than others. And the extra treatment doesn't always translate to longer or better lives. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, May 30, 2008* [Read more](#)

At the End of Life, a Turn to "Slow Medicine"

HANOVER, N.H. - Edie Gieg, 85, strides ahead of people half her age and plays a fast-paced game of tennis. But when it comes to health care, she is a champion of "slow medicine," an approach that encourages less aggressive - and less costly - care at the end of life. Slow medicine encourages physicians to put on the brakes when considering care that may have high risks and limited rewards for the elderly, and it educates patients and families how to push back against emergency-room trips and hospitalizations designed for those with treatable illnesses, not the inevitable erosion of advanced age. *The New York Times*, May 6, 2008 [Read more](#)

Suggestions or Comments about this Update?

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Contact Us Form: <http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/contact.cfm>

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