

Dear Community Member,

Welcome to the New Year! As you'll see from the news in this Update, The Puget Sound Health Alliance is moving forward on a number of fronts, with more involvement than ever from physicians, hospitals, employers, health plans, consumer groups and others. We expect 2007 to be a banner year in health care quality improvement.

We encourage everyone to get involved. To find out more about joining the Alliance, go to www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/join/joinnow.cfm. Please share this Update with your colleagues, friends and family to spread the word about our ongoing progress to improve health care in the region.

Margaret Stanley
Executive Director

Progress At-A-Glance

Thanks to the work of many local leaders and community members, the Alliance has made great progress in several areas since the last Update:

- ✓ **Selected by the federal government to be the nation's first "Community Leader for Value-driven Health Care."** Health & Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt announced this distinction last month at a standing-room only event at the Starbucks Support Center.
- ✓ **Included in Governor Gregoire's budget proposal** to the Legislature. The proposal includes \$2 million for the Health Care Authority to contract with the Alliance to take the health care performance report statewide.
- ✓ **Highlighted by the Washington State Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Costs and Access in their final report.** The report recommends that state agencies partner with the Alliance to "develop a sound set of measures allowing consumers to compare provider cost and quality."
- ✓ **Created the *Proposed Approach to Developing the Performance Report*** and received comments and suggestions on the proposal from many groups and individuals (*more on this on page 3*). Send in your views by Feb 15. The Board will consider comments received as they make final decisions on the content and timing of the initial regional quality and efficiency report. See www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/ProposedApproachtoReport.html

- ✓ **Reached agreement with more than a dozen organizations to supply their claims data** to help create the regional health care quality report. Suppliers include health plans, public and private self-insured employers, and Taft-Hartley union trusts. Data from other organizations will be added to the reports over time. For more information about what data are being compiled and how and when they will be presented, see the *Proposed Approach to Developing the Performance Report*, above.
- ✓ **Completed clinical improvement reports on low back pain and depression**, which include recommended quality measures and strategies for improving care for these conditions.
- ✓ Received a Washington State Department of Health grant to **encourage physicians and clinics to seek National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) recognition** for quality care for diabetes and heart disease.
- ✓ Announced **\$1 million in awards for clinics and hospitals for developing electronic medical records, registries and other health information technology**, via the Washington Health Information Collaborative, a partnership of First Choice Health, the Washington Health Care Authority, Qualis Health and the Alliance.
- ✓ Adopted Communication Principles and recommended that **all organizations that provide health care information to consumers apply these key principles to ensure effective communication.**
- ✓ Hosted visits from national researchers associated with **The Commonwealth Fund, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Americans for Quality Health Care.**
- ✓ **Received coverage in news articles and editorials in many local and national publications**, including the *Commonwealth Fund Newsletter*, *Washington Family Physician*, *Seattle Times*, *Seattle P-I*, *The Olympian*, *The Tacoma News Tribune*, *Olympia Business Watch*, *Puget Sound Business Journal*, and *Digital Healthcare and Productivity*. For details, see www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/news/index.html
- ✓ **Grew the Alliance to 141 organizations**, plus individual consumers.

Community Involvement in Developing the Performance Report

Since the Board adopted the proposed approach to how we will develop the health care performance report for the public, Alliance staff have been sharing information and gathering comments from groups throughout Snohomish, Kitsap, King, Pierce and Thurston counties. Developing the regional report using an effective and open process will help ensure that the reports are timely, trusted and useful for everyone.

To review the proposed approach and provide comments, go to www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/ProposedApproachtoReport.html

Special thanks to the WA State Medical Association, WA Medical Group Management Association, WA Academy of Family Physicians, WA Medical Group Alliance, King County Academy of Family Physicians, Allenmore Hospital, Evergreen Healthcare, Harrison Medical Center, Northwest Hospital, Providence Everett Medical Center, Swedish Medical Center, WA State Hospital Association, WA Healthcare Forum Chronic Care Workgroup, First Choice Health and others for helping the Alliance get the word out and gather comments from practicing physicians and hospital leaders across the region. We also appreciate the many others who are meeting with the Alliance to learn about the process and offer their views. These include: Retail Drug Employees Trust, NW Administrators Trust, UFCW Trust, SPEEA, IAM, SEIU, several Rotary clubs and League of Women Voters local chapters, Community Development Roundtable, WA Roundtable, Association of WA Healthcare Plans and the WA Policy Center. To arrange for Alliance staff to meet with your group, contact Diane Giese at diane@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org.

The Alliance Continues to Grow!

There are now 141 organizations that belong to the Alliance in addition to individual members. Organizations that have joined the Alliance since our last Update include:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Alaska Airlines | Rockwood Family Medicine |
| Auburn Internal Medicine Assoc., P.S. | Sound Family Medicine |
| Cardiovascular Consultants, Inc. | Todd Pacific Shipyards |
| Complementary Healthcare Plans | Washington Acupuncture and Oriental Medical Assn |
| Fifth Avenue Internal Medicine | Washington Heart Care |
| Horizon Air | Washington State Chiropractic Association |
| Lakewood Orthopedic Surgeons | Washington State Health Insurance Pool |
| MultiCare Medical Group | Washington State Medical Oncology Society |
| Puget Sound Cancer Centers | |

For a full list, go to www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/join/participants.html

Upcoming Events

2007 Northwest Patient Safety Conference (3/22/07, Doubletree Hotel by SeaTac) Crucial to patient safety is effective communication among patients, their families and caregivers. Learn leading edge ways to improve safety by asking the right questions and providing follow-up on treatment.

The 4th Annual World HealthCare Congress (04/22-24, Washington DC) Alliance members will be among those featured as panelists at this conference, which brings together business and healthcare leaders to share strategies to foster value, quality and consumer engagement in health care.

For more about these and other events, go to the Alliance “Upcoming Events” page at www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/resources/Events.html

Other News to Note

Hospital Quality and Cost Comparisons Now Available—The Washington State Hospital Association now offers comparison information about the cost and quality of treatments at hospitals around the state. It’s a great first step in increasing access to information to help consumers, employers and others make informed decisions. For more, go to www.wsha.org and click on “hospital transparency.”

The Value of Prevention—We know an enormous amount about how to prevent heart attacks with powerful drugs and healthy lifestyle habits, such as stopping smoking, getting exercise and eating well. With the right preventive care, people can cut their risk of a heart attack by up to 80 percent, cardiologists estimate. Source: [What's a Pound of Prevention Really Worth?](#) David Leonhardt, The New York Times, January 24, 2007

Better Care for Less—The front page of the Wall Street Journal highlighted Virginia Mason Medical Center’s successful collaboration with Starbucks, Aetna and other Puget Sound area employers to cut health-care costs and improve treatment for expensive health problems, such as back pain. Source: *Novel Plan Helps Hospital Wean Itself Off Pricey Tests*, Vanessa Fuhrmans, The Wall Street Journal, January 12, 2007

Applause for the Polyclinic—In November, Seattle’s Polyclinic and 12 of its physicians earned recognition from the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) and the American Diabetes Association for exemplary care of diabetic patients.

Local Quality Report Updated and Available—Premera Blue Cross published its 2006 Quality Score Card, available to the public and endorsed by 16 of the

largest medical groups in Washington. The report showed continued improvement among participating clinics. Go to: <http://www.premera.com/qsc>

Measuring and Reporting on Care Effectiveness Leads to Better Quality—

The National Committee for Quality Assurance report on The State of Health Care Quality 2006 shows that a growing number of health providers and plans are measuring and reporting on the effectiveness of care—and that the aspects of care that are being measured are improving. The report noted that “low-quality care leads to an estimated 64.7 million avoidable sick days: the equivalent of almost 270,000 full-time employees, or the combined workforces of Starbucks and Boeing, calling in sick for an entire year.” Full report at: www.ncqa.org/Communications/SOHC2006/SOHC_2006.pdf

If you have suggestions regarding the content of this Update or would like to submit news to possibly include in future Updates, contact Diane Giese at (206)448-2570 ext 117 or diane@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org