

---

## Community Update

February 1, 2008

---

### In this issue

- First Community Checkup Report: Room to Improve on the Basics
- Survey Shows Patients Want Standards, Information and Accountability

### Greetings Alliance Participant,

*With this special issue of the Community Update, we proudly announce the publication of the first [Community Checkup](#), a snapshot of health care provided in the Puget Sound Region.*

*This exciting development is the result of hundreds of hours of work by regional medical and technical experts, business and community leaders, Alliance staff and consultants. Read on for highlights from the first Community Checkup report to the public assessing health care performance across the region. To see the full report, go to [www.WACommunityCheckup.org](http://www.WACommunityCheckup.org)*

*Please consider joining the Alliance as we continue with this important work to improve health care quality and affordability for everyone in the region. Click here to [learn more about participating in the Alliance](#).*

Regards,

Margaret Stanley  
Executive Director

### First Community Checkup Report: Room to Improve on the Basics

---



~ ~  
For the first time in the region, everyone has information to see how we are doing, community- wide, on ensuring that patients get certain aspects of health care that are recommended by national medical guidelines. The first regional Community Checkup shows that we all have room for improvement. The report, based on a vast draw of data reflecting the care provided to more than 1.6 million patients in King, Pierce, Snohomish, Kitsap and Thurston counties, identified

opportunity for improvement in essentials such as cholesterol checks and other basic services.

The report is evidence that doctors, patients, insurers, employers and union trusts must each step up to do their part to improve health care quality and affordability

The Community Checkup shows results for 81 large clinic locations, which are part of 14 clinic systems that volunteered to be included in the inaugural report: Evergreen Health Care, Group Health, Minor & James Medical, MultiCare Health System, Northwest

Physicians Network, Pacific Medical Centers, Providence Physician Group, Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Centers, Swedish Physicians, The Everett Clinic, The Polyclinic, UW Medicine Neighborhood Clinics, Valley Medical Center and Virginia Mason.

The report measures 21 types of care provided to patients, in the areas of diabetes, heart disease, depression, low back pain, use of generic drugs, use of antibiotics and prevention. It is based on combined data from 14 health plans, union trusts and self-insured employers in the region. The data reflects care provided to about 70 percent of the insured, non-Medicare population in the five-county region, between January 2004 and December 2006. The data used to create the report does not include patients' personally identifiable information, such as name or birthdate, nor does it include cost, charges or payment amounts. The data used to generate the report comes from claims submitted by clinics for care that they delivered to patients.

The first report creates a baseline to understand aspects of local health care. Compared to other communities reporting on the same types of measures, the results for Puget Sound look similar. In health care there are several decision points in the process, so many people may influence a given result. A few examples:

- Across the region, about 20% of patients diagnosed with heart disease or diabetes did not have their cholesterol checked at least once during the year assessed.
- Only about 40% of patients taking a drug to lower cholesterol filled the prescription with a generic. Based on an Alliance analysis done in 2007, an increase of ten percentage points in the use of generics to lower cholesterol would save more than \$7 million in the region.
- On the upside, more than 90% of children seen for the common cold were not given an unnecessary antibiotic. This may be due to community education efforts -- such as the WSM-ERF AWARE program -- to help people understand that antibiotics are ineffective in treating the common cold.

These results underscore the need for each of us to do our part to help make necessary improvements:

- Doctors and other health care professionals should use the report to learn from each other and look at evidence-based approaches to improve the quality of care they provide to their patients;
- Health plans and clinics should share ideas on how to make, and support, improvement;
- Employers and other purchasers should ensure that the benefits they provide or purchase cover the basics of effective health care; and,
- Patients should talk with their doctors about the report and what they need to do to be as healthy as possible.

To learn more and read the full report, visit the Community Checkup website at [www.wacomunitycheckup.org](http://www.wacomunitycheckup.org).

To read news coverage about the Community Checkup, go to "[Alliance in the News](#)."

If you would like to watch a broadcast of the Community Checkup Report as it was unveiled to the public, it will be on KCTV (Comcast Channel 22) on the

following dates and times:

- o Friday 2/1/08 at 6:00PM
- o Saturday 2/2/08 at 6:00PM
- o Sunday 2/3/08 at 10:00 AM

If the times above don't fit your schedule, it will be broadcast several more times. To find out when, check the KCTV schedule at [www.metrokc.gov/kctv/](http://www.metrokc.gov/kctv/).

You can also watch it as a streaming video on your computer by going to the [KCTV website](#).

**Survey Shows Patients Want Standards, Information and Accountability**

~~~~~

A brand new survey shows that patients overwhelmingly want information from their doctors, greater accountability from the health care system, including standard care guidelines for doctors to use. The statewide survey of 600 Washington voters also addresses voter feelings on a range of issues about coverage and cost. The survey was commissioned by CodeBlueNow!, a nonpartisan, nonprofit based in Seattle, and was conducted by the Gilmore Research Group, a Seattle-based market research firm. To see the complete survey results, go to [CodeBlueNow! website](#). Or call CodeBlueNow! at 206-217-9430.

**Suggestions or Comments about this Update?**

~~~~~

Email: [diane@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](mailto:diane@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org)  
 Contact Us Form: <http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/contact.cfm>  
 ~~~~~