



Update to the Community

May 8, 2008

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Dear Community Member

We recently announced the exciting news that Mary O. McWilliams has been selected to serve as our next executive director. Currently the President of Regence BlueShield in Washington, Mary comes to the Alliance with an extensive and impressive background in health care and leadership in the business community. As a founding Alliance Board member, she also brings a passion for and longstanding commitment to the organization and its work. I am delighted to be leaving the organization in the capable hands of someone with such remarkable dedication, experience and talent. Mary will be leaving her position at Regence and will begin at the Alliance on June 23. 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](#).

Regards,

Margaret Stanley

Progress At-A-Glance

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

- **Completed baseline survey on health benefits and workplace wellness practices** among employer members of the Alliance.
- **Convened the Targeting Quality Improvement Workgroup**, which will recommend key focus areas for health quality improvement initiatives based on the results of the Community Checkup and other data sources.
- **Conducted email campaign and survey with the Washington Health Foundation and Seattle Storm to promote awareness of the Community Checkup**. More than 500 people responded to the survey, which included a variety of questions about the Checkup and how patients can use the report to inform their health care choices.
- **Presented to the Chief Executive Forum and to Point B Business Consultants** on practices to promote efficient and affordable health care; also presented to regional health care marketing professionals about research on

patient and provider perceptions of "quality" and strategies for communicating about quality.

- **Participated with the Washington Health Foundation in two focus groups** at the University of Washington on how and where students find information about health care.

Want to find out more? *Keep reading!*

Current and Upcoming Events and Opportunities

The Washington Policy Center 2008 Health Care Conference will be Tuesday, May 13th, from 7:30 am - 1:30 pm at the Double Tree Hotel in SeaTac. The cost is \$65 per person for breakfast, lunch and all conference panels, or \$35 per person for the keynote lunch featuring Grace-Marie Turner of the Galen Institute. To register, go to <https://secure.washingtonpolicy.org/hcc2008.php> or contact Anna Carroll at acarroll@washingtonpolicy.org or (206) 937-9691.

The Institute for Health and Productivity Management's Fourth Annual Puget Sound Academy Forum - Partnering with the Employee to Maximize the Value of Health in the Workplace - will take place Tuesday May 13 from 7:30 am - 1 pm at the Museum of Flight in Seattle. The event is supported by The Washington State Health Care Authority and Washington Wellness, and sponsored by sanofi-aventis. Please RSVP to Karla Levy (karla@ihpm.org).

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

"Putting the Pieces Together" - A conference focusing on successful community healthcare collaboratives that improve healthcare access, care and quality, will be June 2-3 at the Holiday Inn Sea-Tac. The conference is sponsored by Communities Connect and the Group Health Community Foundation. To register, visit: www.wacommunitiesconnect.org

The Kitsap County Medical Society Foundation / Kitsap County school district's Fun Run and fitness fair, presented by Harrison Medical Center, will be Sunday June 1 from noon - 3 pm at the Kitsap Fairgrounds Pavilion in Bremerton. The 1.2 mile walk/run or 5k (3.1 mile) run will be the finale of a 7- week fitness program; participants will have accumulated 26.2 miles (a marathon's worth!) of running or other physical activity. For more information, go to: <http://www.kcmedical.org/foundation/files/2008funrunreg.pdf>

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

Alliance in the News

McWilliams to Head Health Alliance

Mary McWilliams has been named executive director of the Puget Sound Health Alliance. The nonprofit corporation was formed in late 2004 to research how to improve both

health and health care in the Puget Sound region. McWilliams is currently president of Regence BlueShield in Washington and also is a past board chair of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce. She replaces the first executive director, Margaret Stanley, who is retiring. *Puget Sound Business Journal*, May 2, 2008

Other Health News

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### **Life Spans Falling for Least-healthy Americans, Study by Harvard, UW Finds**

For the first time in generations, life expectancy for large numbers of Americans is stagnating or falling as more people pay for obesity, high blood pressure and other chronic conditions with shortened lives. The findings, published Monday by researchers at Harvard University and the University of Washington, show that while Americans are living longer than ever on average, life expectancy is changing at increasingly unequal rates among the population. *The Seattle Times*, April 22, 2008 [Read more](#)

### **Drug Companies to Reveal Grants They Give Doctors**

For years, the nation's largest drug and medical device manufacturers have courted doctors with consulting fees, free trips to exotic locales and sponsoring the educational conferences that physicians attend. Those financial ties in most cases need not be disclosed and can lead to arrangements that some say improperly influence medical care. Now, under the threat of regulation from Congress, the two industries are promising to be more forthcoming about their spending. *The Seattle Times*, April 16, 2008 [Read more](#)

### **Care, Cost Near Life's End Vary Greatly**

For chronically ill patients in their last two years of life, Medicare spends an average of \$59,379 in New Jersey but only \$32,523 in North Dakota. The difference is primarily a result of patients getting more hospital care, but not necessarily better care, according to a new report. Researchers at Dartmouth Medical School say that vast differences in spending patterns nationally point to why policymakers need to focus on volume when it comes to restraining costs - not just on the price of a particular service or on expanding health coverage to the uninsured. *The Seattle Times*, April 7, 2008 [Read more](#)

### **Drug Errors Hurt 1 in 15 Hospitalized Kids: New research method finds far more cases**

Medicine mix-ups, accidental overdoses and bad drug reactions harm roughly one out of 15 hospitalized children, according to the first scientific test of a new detection method. That number is far higher than earlier estimates and bolsters concerns already heightened by well-publicized cases like the accidental drug overdose of actor Dennis Quaid's newborn twins last November. *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, April 7, 2008 [Read more](#)

### **New Colon Cancer Screening Guidelines**

Earlier this month, the American Cancer Society and two other groups released revised colon-cancer- screening guidelines that recommend patients get colonoscopies or similar exams that can find polyps, instead of fecal tests, which only indicate the potential presence of precancerous or cancerous cells. It's the first time the guidelines have made such a preferential distinction. *The Seattle Times*, March 31, 2008 [Read more](#)

### **Better Incentives Could Make Health Care Safer, More Affordable**

With the presidential race in full swing, the electorate, candidates and various advocacy groups view health care as a top concern. Nearly all agree Americans need better

coverage, improved quality and more- affordable health care. But rarely do the candidates address a fundamental question: How can everyone, including the currently uninsured, get better care - without more money being spent? *The Seattle Times* (editorial), March 21, 2008 [Read more](#)

**Suggestions or Comments about this Update?**

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