

Dear Community Member,

We continue to make exciting progress, including some significant steps in developing the performance reports. After careful consideration, the Board of Directors has made some important decisions about what information will be included in the preliminary reports for doctors and hospitals, employers and other purchasers, and health plans, and how that information may be used before the reports are made public. The Board will hold a retreat later this month to identify priorities for future efforts around incentives and quality improvement.

As you will see below, the Alliance committees are moving forward on many fronts, from working on how we will enhance and expand future reports, to recommendations for improving preventive care and engaging consumers in their health and health care. We look forward to many more developments in the months ahead.

Enjoy the summer!

Margaret Stanley

Progress At-A-Glance

Thanks to the hard work of the Board, committees, workgroups and staff, the Alliance has made progress on many fronts, including:

- ✓ **Took action on the next round of decisions required for the initial performance reports** at the May 29 Board of Directors meeting.
- ✓ **Secured a second grant from the Department of Health** to promote the National Committee for Quality Assurance Physician Recognition Programs through June 2008.
- ✓ **Developed a draft layout for the performance report**, now being reviewed by Alliance committees for consideration and input.
- ✓ **Completed the second round of Pharmaceuticals (Rx) Clinical Improvement Team (CIT) recommendations.** The CIT report will be submitted to the Quality Improvement Committee for consideration later in June.
- ✓ **Co-sponsored Health Care Benefit Design Strategies learning session** at the Washington Athletic Club featuring Dr. Tom Parry, president of the Integrated Benefits Institute, and Martha Fuller, CFO of the Seahawks.
- ✓ **Convened two new committees**, the Asthma Clinical Improvement Team and the Workgroup on Selection of Hospital Quality Measures.
- ✓ **Prepared to host the upcoming Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Aligning Forces for Quality annual meeting**, which will include representatives from 14 communities around the country along with a variety of technical experts. This

three-day meeting, to be held later this month, will focus on public reporting, quality improvement and consumer engagement.

Welcome to the Alliance!

Since our last Update to you, the following groups and individuals have joined the Alliance: Access Telepsychiatry, Highline Medical Group, Mills Meyers Swartling, Residence XII for Women, Seattle OB/GYN Group, TRUEbenefits LLC, Wyeth Pharmaceuticals, Dr. Norm Charney, Kellie Hamblin, Sherry Porter, and Steve Wright. Welcome everyone!

The Alliance now includes 149 organizations and 40 individuals.

Welcome to all new Alliance participants. The entire community THANKS YOU for your support and involvement! If you want to help improve quality, affordability and patient experience in local health care, get involved with the Alliance. To join, go to the [sign-up page on our website](#) or contact Sean McCliment at sean@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org

Reminder: Any organization or individual who has joined the Alliance can access committee materials by logging into the Participant Only section of our website. Participants are also welcome to attend Alliance committee, workgroup and Board meetings.

Upcoming Events

Washington Policy Center's 5th Annual Health Care Conference – The theme of this year's conference is Emerging Trends in Health Care. Keynote speaker Dr. Richard Gratzer, a physician who has practiced in both the U.S. and Canada, is author of "The Cure: How Capitalism Can Save American Health Care." The conference is June 14 from 7:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. at the Double Tree Hotel in SeaTac. For registration and details, go to <http://www.washingtonpolicy.org/events.html> or contact Anna Carroll at acarroll@washingtonpolicy.org or (206) 937-9691. Cost is \$65 per person and includes breakfast, lunch, and all conference panels; the cost for the keynote lunch only is \$35 per person.

Step Out to Fight Diabetes Walks – The American Diabetes Association is sponsoring three upcoming walks in the area: Saturday, Sept. 15, Point Defiance Park, Tacoma; Saturday, Sept. 29, Seward Park, Seattle; and Saturday, Oct. 6, Tulalip Amphitheatre, Tulalip. To register online, go to www.diabetes.org/stepout. To learn about sponsorship opportunities for the walks, contact Nancy Rutstein at (206) 282-4616 or nrutstein@diabetes.org.

Health News

Who Pays for Efficiency?

SAVING money can be expensive. Indeed, the quest to save dollars in the nation's \$2.1 trillion annual health care bill is becoming a lucrative market of its own. Thousands of companies, large and small, are pitching cost-saving ideas that range from electronic patient records to new medical devices. *The New York Times, June 11, 2007*

Need a Knee Replaced? Check Your ZIP Code.

WHY does health care for the average Medicare patient cost nearly twice as much a year in New Jersey, at \$8,076, as it does in Hawaii, at \$4,529? The differences are one example of perplexing geographic variations in medical expenses and quality. And in a study that has important implications for the nation's \$2 trillion health care tab, researchers have found that more intensive and expensive care does not necessarily mean better outcomes. In fact, the opposite may be true. *The New York Times, June 11, 2007*

Losing is winning: Weighing what they've won - Pierce County Biggest Winner participants knew they'd lose weight, but contestants Megan Richardson and Stephanie Johnson, never expected the 14-week program could change their lives. They were given memberships to the YMCA and met weekly with their team members and a personal trainer for weigh-ins and workouts, ultimately losing more than 25 pounds each. *The Tacoma News Tribune, June 12, 2007*

Better Ways to Treat Back Pain: Insurers, Employers Target Excessive Scans and Surgeries To Improve Patient Outcomes

A new Back Pain Recognition Program aims to reduce the number of superfluous tests and procedures and increase the adoption of treatments that are proven to work. The program is sponsored by the National Committee for Quality Assurance, an organization that monitors health-care quality and accredits health plans. Doctors and chiropractors will apply to the program and those who adhere to its treatment guidelines will be listed in the NCQA's searchable online directory and cited on consumer Web sites and provider directories offered by health plans to their members. *The Wall Street Journal, May 16, 2007*

An F In Health Care

The New York-based Commonwealth Fund released a comprehensive cross-border study of health care systems in rich countries and, no surprise, ranks the U.S. as pretty much last. Except when it comes to cost, that is. We pay more overall and get less. *TomPaine.com, May 16, 2007*

If you have suggestions about 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.