
Update to the Community

August 2009

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Dear Community Member

Thank you for helping to make the July release of the third Community Checkup Report a success. More than 125 people attended the All Alliance meeting a few weeks ago, and the report generated significant interest from local media and others within the health care community. The Community Checkup is recognized as the single, objective, public report that measures the variation in performance of medical groups, hospitals, and plans and is intended to stimulate individual and collective action to improve quality, reduce waste, and lower the costs of chronic disease and preventable conditions.

But the work doesn't stop there. The Alliance is looking ahead to further our goal of achieving a more effective and efficient health care system for our region. In the coming months, you can look forward to comparing health plan performance in the region. The eValue8 tool permits purchasers to measure the relative performance of health plans within their market , so later we will add a health plan tab to compare results on www.WaCommunityCheckup.org. We are currently working on developing reports that will measure the comparative use of resources across various communities and delivery systems, so that we can consider both quality and cost data to give a sense of total value. The first set of reports will be assembled from existing public data sources and subsequent reports will draw upon claims data from the Alliance data set. You can see that we expect the Community Checkup to continue to be a dynamic source of new information and insights for Puget Sound.

Regards,

Mary McWilliams
Alliance Executive Director

Progress At-A-Glance

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

- **Unveiling the expanded and updated 2009 Community Checkup Report at the All Alliance meeting on July 16.** More than 125 people were in attendance.

- **Confirming Alliance values to stakeholder groups and setting fee schedule for next year and beyond.** More information will be available shortly.
- **Completing eValue8 process to assess and manage the quality of health plans.** By September the Alliance intends to include summary level results on our website.

Want to find out more? *Keep reading!*

New Community Checkup Report Available

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 The 2009 Community Checkup report was unveiled at the July 16th All Alliance meeting. The expanded and updated Community Checkup report compares care in doctors' offices and hospitals, highlighting where improvement is needed. The Community Checkup is the largest medical care comparison report ever produced for the Puget Sound area.

The updated report shows results for clinics with four or more clinicians, based on care provided to about 2 million residents by 76 medical groups, about 240 clinics and 30 hospitals. The clinics account for about 80% of the primary care doctors in pediatrics, family or general medicine, obstetrics and gynecology, and general internal medicine in the region.

The report can be used by doctors and other health professionals to see how they compare with peers then learn and apply best practices to improve quality. Patients can use the report to see the importance of certain health services, then talk with their doctor about how to be as healthy as possible. Health plans, employers and union trusts can use the report to improve benefit design, remove barriers to effective care, and engage individuals to make better decisions. All organizations can also use the report results during contract discussions.

For the full, searchable report, visit: [www.WACommunityCheckup.org](http://www.WACommunityCheckup.org).

### **From the NYT: In Health Reform, a Cancer Offers an Acid Test**

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 It's become popular to pick your own personal litmus test for health care reform. For some liberals, reform will be a success only if it includes a new government- run insurance plan to compete with private insurers. For many conservatives, a bill must exclude such a public plan. The author of this article, David Leonhardt's litmus test is the prostate cancer test. To read the full article go to:
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/08/business/economy/08leonhardt.html?_r=1

From USA Today: 'Double failure' at USA's hospitals

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 Too many people die needlessly at U.S. hospitals, according to a sweeping new Medicare analysis showing wide variation in death rates between the best hospitals and the worst. The analysis examined death rates for heart attacks, heart failure and pneumonia at more than 4,600 hospitals across the USA. At 5.9% of hospitals, patients with pneumonia died at rates significantly higher than the national average. With heart failure, 3.4% of hospitals had death rates higher than the average, and 1.2% of hospitals were higher when it came to heart attack. To read the full article go to: [www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-07-09-hospital-deaths\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2009-07-09-hospital-deaths_N.htm)

## **From Health Affairs: Obesity-Related Hospitalizations For Children And Youth Nearly Double**

Hospitalizations of children and youth with a diagnosis of obesity nearly doubled between 1999 and 2005, researchers report in an article published on the Health Affairs Web site. Recent data suggest that the prevalence of obesity among children and youth stayed relatively constant over this period. Nevertheless, the social and economic costs of pediatric obesity increased. To read the full article go to:

<http://content.healthaffairs.org/cgi/content/abstract/hlthaff.28.4.w751>

## **Upcoming Events**

### **City Club's: The Art of Living Well at Any Age - August 18, 2009**

Living well is easier said than done. With new technologies and practices, it's possible to stay young for longer than ever before, but living well is about more than just our physical health. It's about our mental well being, spiritual, cultural and intellectual fulfillment. Bring your own questions and get tips from the experts on living well at any age. For more information go to:

<http://www.seattlecityclub.org/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=22>

### **Northwest Medical Informatics Symposium - September 10-11, 2009**

Inland Northwest Health Services (INHS) in partnership with eHealth Initiative will hold the Northwest Medical Informatics Symposium (NMIS), a health information technology conference featuring national and regional speakers on September 10 and 11 in Spokane, Washington. NMIS brings together urban and rural healthcare professionals to learn about the latest in health information technology including evolving initiatives, improving patient outcomes, safety equipment and software purchasing, training and HIPAA issues. Anyone interested in health information technology, with emphasis on the health care delivery system in the Northwest should attend this conference. Pre-Conference Workshops are featured on September 8 and 9 for individuals who would like to learn more about applications. For information or to register visit [www.nmis.info](http://www.nmis.info)

### **Association of WA Cities Healthy Worksite Summit - October 7-8, 2009**

The mission of the Healthy Worksite Summit is to provide training and networking opportunities for promoting worksite health in Washington State. The Summit supports anyone interested in designing, promoting and implementing strategies to promote worksite health. Participants represent both large and small organizations from the public and private sectors. The Summit is designed for those representing health promotion, employee benefits and injury prevention. For more information go to: <http://www.awcnet.org/worksitesummit/index.htm>

### **Improving Health, Reforming Health Care: An Employer Call to Action - November 8-10, 2009**

Attention, health care stakeholders! Join the National Business Coalition on Health (NBCH) and its coalition employer members at the health care buyer's premier conference-two days of in-depth training, networking, & product demonstrations with health care's largest employer customers. Meet with peers and experts alike, capitalizing on this unique opportunity to discuss health care issues and insights as NBCH presents Improving Health, Reforming Health Care: An Employer Call to Action. The 2009 Annual Conference will convene nearly 500 health care leaders in Scottsdale, Arizona, November 8-10, to focus on the overarching and interconnected imperatives of health and health care transformation. More information at: <http://www.nbch.org/events/conference.cfm>

**Suggestions or Comments about this Update?**

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

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