
Update to the Community

March 2010

In this issue

- Progress At-A-Glance
- Progress on the 2010 Community Checkup Report on Medical Groups
- Local Hospitals Collaborate to Improve Language Services and Empower Nurses
- New County Health Rankings Give County-by-County Snapshot of Health
- BusinessWeek: Hospitals Slashing Costs and Delivering High Quality Care
- Los Angeles Times: More Bad News About Racial Disparities in Healthcare
- Upcoming Events

Dear Community Member,

First off, I want to make sure that you mark your calendar for an upcoming All Alliance meeting featuring Governor Chris Gregoire on April 9. We'll have more details for you soon. In the meantime, I am happy to report that our All Alliance meeting on health equity in February was one of our largest meetings to date. The meeting was attended by more than 120 participants, many of whom were new to the Alliance work. That level of interest proves that health equity is a real issue in the Puget Sound region and one which we are all committed to solve. The meeting featured more than a dozen poster presentations by local organizations, a panel of local experts and an inspirational keynote delivered by Reed Tuckson, MD, executive vice president and chief of medical affairs for UnitedHealth Group. If you could not attend the event, [visit our website to hear the podcast](#). You will also hear more from the Alliance soon regarding collection of race, ethnicity and language data.

Secondly, I attended the St. Louis Area Business Health Coalition last week to discuss strategies to improve diabetes health and lower costs. The Washington State Department of Health calculated that diabetes affects more than 1.4 million Washington residents. The American Diabetes Association estimates that the total cost of diabetes for people in Washington in 2006 was more than \$3.9 billion. This figure includes excess medical costs of \$2.7 billion, and lost productivity valued at \$1.2 billion. Along with other Washington experts on chronic care, I was pleased to be able to offer some ideas based on progress we have made together in our community.

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:

- **Collecting updated medical clinic physician roster information in preparation for the Spring 2010 release of the Community Checkup.** More information is below.
- **Tracking progress of all four hospitals involved in quality improvement collaboratives sponsored by the Aligning Forces for Quality program.** More details are below and a full summary is available on our website.
- **Convening more than 120 participants including representatives from health plans, employers, providers and consumer groups to discuss health equity in the community.**

Want to find out more? *Keep reading!*

## Progress on the 2010 Community Checkup Report on Medical Groups

~~~~~  
The Alliance has collected all updated medical clinic physician roster information in preparation for the 2010 release of the Community Checkup. Thank you to the medical groups who updated this information so quickly. The next Community Checkup report is scheduled to be publicly released in the spring.

In support of resource-use measurement and analysis to be continued in the fall of 2010, the Alliance is now asking health plans, self-insured employers and union trusts to submit data for the time period of July 1, 2009 to December 31, 2009 by April 30, 2010.

Local Hospitals Collaborate to Improve Language Services and Empower Nurses

~~~~~  
The Puget Sound Health Alliance partners with four hospitals in the Puget Sound region which participate in two quality improvement collaboratives sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's (RWJF) Aligning Forces for Quality (AF4Q) program.

The *Language Quality Improvement Collaborative* aims to discover and trial innovative solutions for hospitals in providing effective language services to patients who speak or understand little or no English. Harborview Medical Center (Seattle) and Valley Medical Center (Renton) are involved in the Language Collaborative. The *Transforming Care at the Bedside Collaborative* is a nurse-led quality improvement initiative to bring about a cultural shift in medical-surgical units resulting in better clinical outcomes, increased time providing direct patient care, reduced nurse turnover and lower costs. St Francis Hospital (Federal Way) and Tacoma General Hospital (Tacoma) are participating in the TCAB collaborative.

The Alliance will continue to help monitor progress of the collaboratives and share key learnings from the hospitals. For a summary on the hospitals' progress and success to date, please visit our [website](#).

### **New County Health Rankings Give County-by-County Snapshot of Health**

~~~~~

The County Health Rankings - the first set of reports to rank the overall health of every county in all 50 states, were released by the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (www.countyhealthrankings.org). The online ranking includes snapshots of U.S. counties with a color-coded map that compares each county's overall health with that of other counties in each of the 50 states. Each county is ranked within the state on how healthy people are and how long they live. They also are ranked on key factors that affect health such as: smoking, obesity, binge drinking, access to primary care providers, rates of high school graduation, rates of violent crime, air pollution levels, liquor store density, unemployment rates and number of children living in poverty.

BusinessWeek: Hospitals Slashing Costs and Delivering High Quality Care

~~~~~

High quality at a low price. Every other industry strives for that combination, but a hospital that does both can be rare. The article profiles Providence Hospital in Everett and its ability to demonstrate that quality care can be delivered at an affordable price, provided hospitals can be persuaded to rethink decades-old practices. Click [here](#) for the full article.

### **Los Angeles Times: More Bad News About Racial Disparities in Healthcare**

~~~~~

Many studies have documented the fact that patients of color are less likely to receive the same quality of medical care as whites, and that those differences often translate to worse health outcomes. The pattern holds up even after taking into account demographic factors such as income, education and health insurance status. To figure out why this is, a group of researchers from Yale University's School of Public Health and the Urban Institute focused on 133,821 patients who were treated for one of 10 surgical procedures at hospitals in New York City or the adjacent counties. They picked 10 specific procedures because prior studies have shown that surgeons and hospitals who perform them more often produce better outcomes. The study, published in the journal Archives of Surgery, found that for all 10 procedures, white patients were more frequently treated by both high-volume hospitals and surgeons than were black, Asian and Hispanic patients. Click [here](#) for the full article.

Upcoming Events

~~~~~

### **20th Annual Art and Science of Health Promotion Conference - March 15-19, 2010**

Under the theme, "What Works Good, Better, Best In Health Promotion?" the 20th Annual Art and Science of Health Promotion Conference will feature the latest findings and most effective applications in the field of health promotion, presented by the top scientists and practitioners in the nation. The conference brings together a national audience of health promotion professionals from across disciplines and settings, and will offer a combination of keynote, lecture, discussion and small

informal group formats. Educational tracks will include: Return on Investment, Program Strategies, Incentives, Health Psychology, Innovative Programs, Research Presentations and Good, Better, Best. Program details and registration information are available at [www.HealthPromotionConference.org](http://www.HealthPromotionConference.org)

**2010 Regional Health Care Education & Training Conference: Impacting Health Care Services for Diverse Communities through Improved Health Care Education and Training - March 26, 2010**

The conference will provide a unique opportunity for professionals from various sectors of the healthcare industry to meet, network and formulate partnerships to meet the growing health care worker shortages in our region. Current trends, both global and local, (changing demographics, growing workforce shortages, health care reform, an aging population and an exploding global health industry) all drive the need for discussion. Community colleges, universities, health care industry partners, and community organizations all have a critical stake in facilitating successful solutions for the major challenges we all face in the present-day health care arena. For more information and to register, please visit:

[https://www.healthedconference.org/Home\\_Page.html](https://www.healthedconference.org/Home_Page.html)

**Dr. Atul Gawande at Seattle Arts & Lectures - May 3, 2010**

Dr. Gawande's talk is entitled "Real Reform: What Is Great Health Care?" A physician/surgeon, New Yorker magazine staffer, and MacArthur Fellow, Atul Gawande scrutinizes medical practices and the health care system. *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science* was a National Book Award finalist. For more information, please visit: [www.lectures.org/gawande.html](http://www.lectures.org/gawande.html)

**Suggestions or Comments about this Update?**

~~~~~

Email: jgallagher@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org

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

~~~~~