

**Media Contact:**

John Gallagher

206.448.2570, ext. 117

[jgallagher@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](mailto:jgallagher@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org)

**Health care quality in Puget Sound region still displays  
substantial variation**

*Puget Sound Health Alliance's Community Checkup shows  
where region needs improvement to become  
consistent high-performer*

SEATTLE, August 10, 2011—Puget Sound medical groups, clinics and hospitals perform among the best in the nation on some measures, while falling significantly short on others, according to the fifth Community Checkup, issued today by the Puget Sound Health Alliance. As a result, many patients receive care from medical groups that are performing at a level that is among the best in the country, while many other patients are not receiving the care that is known to be effective.

“The Community Checkup supports the change that we seek to make,” said Mary McWilliams, executive director of the Alliance. “By working in our focus areas, the Alliance believes that it can achieve its strategic vision: by 2015, physicians, other providers and hospitals in the region will be in the top 10 percent in performance nationally in the delivery of quality, evidence-based care and in the reduction of unwarranted variation, resulting in a significant reduction in medical cost trends. This is a bold goal, but we believe that we can reach it. The Community Checkup is a valuable tool that can help all of us know where to target our efforts at improvement.”

The *Community Checkup* reports on how well care is delivered at the medical group level on 23 measures of quality and appropriateness. The measures fall into areas of prevention, chronic disease management, generic drug substitution and appropriate use of services. The report includes data on care for 1.6 million patients who are covered by commercial insurance and Medicaid managed care in the five counties in the Puget Sound region—King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston—for the period from July 2009 to June 2010. In addition, the *Community Checkup* reports on over forty hospital measures with results being drawn from several public sources. Full results for the Community Checkup, including a downloadable report and executive summary, are available online at [www.WACommunityCheckup.org](http://www.WACommunityCheckup.org).

Among the highlights of the report released today:

- Generic drug substitution results show the greatest amount of variation among medical groups and even within medical groups. The region continues to miss a significant savings opportunity by failing to increase the generic fill rate.
- The region performs well on diabetes management, but even with a high performance thousands of patients did not receive the recommended care during the reporting period. Given that the number of diabetes patients doubled in the state between 1994 and 2009, simply maintaining the present regional average would mean a growing number of patients would not be receiving the care they need.
- Regional results are disappointing for Chlamydia screening, avoiding antibiotics for bronchitis and spirometry testing for COPD. In each of these measures, fewer than half the patients received the care that they should have.
- Hospital quality measures continue to show improvement over time, particularly for heart failure care and pneumonia care. Hospital patient experience shows the most opportunity for improvement.

Data in the *Community Checkup* was supplied by 18 different organizations, including health plans, employers and labor trusts. The report was made possible by the participation of the medical groups, data suppliers and members of the Alliance board and committees who guide the process of producing the report; and by important funding and technical support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's [Aligning Forces for Quality](#) initiative.

###

The Puget Sound Health Alliance ([www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org)), an Aligning Forces for Quality Community, is a non-profit made up of those who provide, pay for and use health care, working to improve quality of care at a price more people can afford. More than 50 individuals and 165 organizations have joined the Alliance, including The Boeing Company, Starbucks, Puget Sound Energy, REI, WA State Health Care Authority, King County and many other employers, physician groups, hospitals, consumer organizations, unions, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, associations and others. A cornerstone of the Alliance work is the Community Checkup, a regional report to the public comparing the performance of clinics and hospitals for basic measures of quality care in the Puget Sound area ([www.wacommunitycheckup.org](http://www.wacommunitycheckup.org)).