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Information on Never Events, Early Elective Deliveries Now Available

Puget Sound Health Alliance expands data on Community Checkup website

SEATTLE, June 17, 2011—The Puget Sound Health Alliance today announced that it had expanded the information available on its [website](#) to include data about two important measures of hospital quality care: never events and early elective deliveries. The two new additions supplement the already rich data available to the public on both hospital care and ambulatory care.

“The Alliance continues to build upon the Community Checkup to present a fuller picture of the quality of care in our region,” said Mary McWilliams, executive director of the Alliance. “Transparency plays an important role in helping to identify variation and spur improvement. We’re committed to adding new information so that all of us will have the information we need in order to know where changes should be made.”

Never events

The term "never events" refers to 28 events or situations that should "never" happen to a patient. These adverse events were identified by the National Quality Forum (NQF), a not-for-profit organization created to develop and implement a national strategy for health care quality measurement and reporting. Washington State law requires every hospital to report to the Department of Health (DOH) when a never event occurs in their facility.

While rare, preventable medical errors in hospitals result in up to 98,000 deaths in the U.S. annually, according to a report from the Institute of Medicine, making medical errors the 8th leading cause of death.

The data available on the Alliance website fall into four categories.

- Surgical events (wrong site, wrong surgical procedure)
- Care management events (medication errors, pressure ulcers)
- Environmental events (falls resulting in death)
- Criminal events (sexual assault)

Unlike other measures available on the Alliance site, the never event data are **not** meant for comparison of hospitals. A higher number of reported events does not mean a

hospital is necessarily less safe; a lower number does not mean a hospital is necessarily safer. The number of events may vary from hospital to hospital for many reasons. Some hospitals are more likely to have patients who are at greater risk for some of these errors. For example, burn patients are at greater risk for pressure sores. Some hospitals may work especially hard to report every possible mistake when reporting to the State as part of their commitment to identify and fix them. In such cases, higher numbers may represent a greater attention to adverse events and their causes.

Early Elective Deliveries

Early Elective Deliveries are deliveries by either cesarean section or induction between 37 weeks and 38 weeks and 6 days of a healthy pregnancy. These births are scheduled by physician and/or patient choice before the 39th week of gestation without a medical reason or requirement.

In the U.S., labor induction rates have more than doubled, from 9.5% in 1990 to 22.5% in 2006, and the cesarean rate grew to a high of 32%. Evidence shows that Early Elective Deliveries can seriously affect the health of both the mother and baby, adding to the costs for care. The result can be the premature delivery of an infant or unnecessary risk of a surgical procedure. Measuring the rate of Early Elective Deliveries, as part of a voluntary hospital reporting program, is a way to track rates over time, compare rates among hospitals, and establish a target for an acceptable level of early elective deliveries.

The Early Elective Delivery measure was developed by The Leapfrog Group, a hospital quality watchdog, and has been endorsed by NQF.

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The Puget Sound Health Alliance (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).