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Alliance to Expand Community Checkup Report to Include About Three Times More Medical Groups

Local medical groups now reviewing draft results for the second Community Checkup report on health care performance in the region

SEATTLE, August 21, 2008—Physician leaders and clinic administrators across the Puget Sound region are now privately reviewing draft results measuring key types of care provided to patients, such as diabetes, heart disease, depression—and now asthma. The results, when finalized, will be available to the public in the Community Checkup report published by the Puget Sound Health Alliance. The Alliance expects to release the next Community Checkup report in November.

The Alliance's first Community Checkup report, published in January of 2008, showed results for 14 medical groups and their 81 clinic locations in King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston counties. This next report is expected to include results for about 45 medical groups and more than 200 clinic locations in the same five counties.

“With this significant addition of medical groups, we are building on the pioneering work of the 14 medical groups who volunteered to be the first to show their results publicly back in January,” said Mary McWilliams, executive director of the Puget Sound Health Alliance. “The next Community Checkup report will expand health care transparency for the region. This private review of draft results by medical groups now is a crucial step to ensure that the public report will continue to be a reliable tool for everyone to help improve health care quality.”

In addition to more medical groups and clinic locations, the next Community Checkup report will include a new measure on asthma. The total number of measures in the second report will be 22, as it will continue to include the initial 21 measures on diabetes, heart disease, depression, low back pain, use of generic drugs, use of antibiotics and prevention. For each measure, the report shows the consistency with which medical groups provide services known to be effective to promote better health, especially for people with chronic conditions.

The purpose of the first two Community Checkup reports is to develop a shared understanding about certain aspects of local health care. “This second Community Checkup builds on the foundation started by the first report,” said Robert Mecklenburg, M.D., chair of the Alliance’s Quality Improvement Committee and Medical Director of the Center for Healthcare Solutions at Virginia Mason. “With the addition of the second report, we are making further progress in establishing a sound baseline for assessing the quality of care in our region into the future.” Community Checkup reports published in 2009 and beyond will be used to identify trends and begin tracking improvement over time.

To give physician leaders and clinic administrators an opportunity to review and comment on their draft results privately before the report is finalized, the Alliance has developed a secure portal for each medical group to access draft results for their medical group overall, and for each of their clinic locations and their individual clinicians.. In addition to accessing results directly, medical groups can send feedback to the Alliance and use the data for their internal quality improvement efforts. Partially funded by a grant from The Regence Foundation, the secure portal was developed in collaboration with OneHealthPort and Milliman, Inc.

“Having the secure, web-based portal allows us to efficiently share data from a much larger number of clinics. This is a major improvement to the manual approach we used last time which required that we email password-protected spreadsheets to each medical group,” said Karen Onstad, director of health information for the Health Alliance.

Similar to the first Community Checkup report, the data used to create the second Community Checkup report does not include any information that personally identifies individual patients. In general, the public version of the report will include results at several levels: average for the Puget Sound region overall, average across each of five counties in the region, average across each medical group, and average for each clinic location.

The Puget Sound Health Alliance is a non-profit made up of those who provide, pay for and use health care, working together to improve quality of care at a price more people can afford. More than 50 individuals and 170 organizations have joined the Alliance, including Boeing, Starbucks, Puget Sound Energy, REI, Washington Mutual, WA State Health Care Authority, King County and many other employers, physician clinics, hospitals, consumer groups, unions and trusts, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, and other health organizations. See www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org. For the full report, go to www.WACommunityCheckup.org

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