

Congress approves \$191,000 for online health services

Tacoma-based Northwest Physicians Network has announced a \$191,000 federal appropriation to support "health record banking" in the greater Pierce County area. The money will go to the South Sound Health Communication Network, a 501c3 sponsored by Northwest Physicians Network and Pierce County Medical Society.

"This funding will catalyze the expansion of our health services, which allow patients and physicians to store health information in a secure, online environment," said Rick MacCornack, executive director of South Sound Health Communication Network.

Any physician, regardless of hospital affiliation, can connect to an online community that allows the efficient sharing of patient health data. This service improves patient care, increases transparency in the process, and reduces needless duplication.

Roughly 300 patients are using the current service, with some 1,600 physicians and health care professionals throughout Pierce County also enrolled. The full "health information banking" service will be rolled out in 2008.