

## **Puget Sound Health Alliance updates report card on local healthcare providers**

Health Care Finance News, July 17, 2009

SEATTLE, WA – The Puget Sound Health Alliance in Washington has unveiled an expanded and updated report card comparing area doctors and hospitals and highlighting where improvement is needed.

"Too many patients still don't get effective healthcare recommended by national medical guidelines," said David Fleming, MD, the alliance's board chairman and director of public health in Seattle and King County. "The good news is that by using insights from the Community Checkup report, then making changes to improve the results, we can reduce the personal and financial cost of chronic disease and preventable health conditions."

According to a statement by the alliance, the report highlights areas where doctors or hospitals could improve effectiveness and value of care.

The findings include:

- Depression is the top driver of health-related costs in the workplace. Getting better results will improve patient health and the bottom line for employers. On average in the region, 30 percent to 50 percent of patients diagnosed with depression and given prescriptions for antidepressants go off the medication too soon. While some medical groups have earned better results, even the best result in the region still indicates as many as 40 percent of patients don't stay on their medication for the recommended time.
- Results for people on Medicaid show that some local clinics are able to provide recommended care to Medicaid clients at better rates than national benchmarks for the commercially-insured population.
- Too many patients fill prescriptions with expensive, advertised brand-name drugs rather than an equally effective generic. An alliance estimate, using local health plan data for four types of drugs, shows that for every 1 percent increase in the use of a generic in lieu of a brand-name drug, more than \$2.5 million can be saved in this region.

"Real healthcare reform isn't just about legislation, it's about improving how healthcare is delivered, covered and received by patients," said Mary McWilliams, executive director of the alliance. "Now that we're shining a light on areas for improvement, it's time for each of us to roll up our sleeves and make specific changes to improve healthcare value in this region."

In April, the alliance board lifted restrictions on how the report may be used, starting with the July Community Checkup, to encourage decisions that change behavior and improve results.

"The alliance is the one place where everyone has come together to improve healthcare," said Lloyd David, CEO of the Polyclinic and vice chairman of the alliance board. "The Community Checkup is an essential part of ensuring that we all head in the right direction together."