

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **LOCAL HOSPITALS SELECTED TO PARTICIPATE IN NATIONAL QUALITY IMPROVEMENT COLLABORATIVE TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO LANGUAGE SERVICES**

*Part of the local 'Aligning Forces for Quality' program, the effort will focus on improving language services with patients who speak little English*

Seattle, Wash. – Puget Sound Health Alliance today announced that Harborview Medical Center and Valley Medical Center have been selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) to participate in the *Aligning Forces for Quality: Language Quality Improvement Collaborative* (Language QI Collaborative). The Collaborative will identify and test ways for hospitals to provide timely, effective language services to patients who speak or understand little or no English.

The Language QI Collaborative is part of *Aligning Forces for Quality* (AF4Q), the Foundation's signature program to lift the overall quality of health care in targeted communities, as well as reduce racial and ethnic disparities, and provide models for real reform. Puget Sound was selected by RWJF as one of 15 communities nationwide to serve as 'learning laboratories' for improving the quality of care being delivered in a given region. Puget Sound Health Alliance coordinates local efforts for the program.

“In every region involved in the Aligning Forces for Quality initiative, including Puget Sound, broad-based teams of people who get, give and pay for care are working together to improve health care quality, said Mary McWilliams, executive director, the Puget Sound Health Alliance. “By aligning people from across the community who might not typically work together, we are helping to achieve a community-wide transformation of health care.”

Just as any patient expects care from a trained, qualified health care professional, a patient with limited English proficiency should expect that language services be provided by professionals who are specially trained in interpreting health and medical information. When patients are unable to communicate important information to or understand information provided by their health care providers, the result can be missed diagnoses and medical errors.

“We are proud to participate in this effort to evaluate and improve the language services we provide to our patients,” said Eileen Whalen, executive director of Harborview Medical Center. “Harborview serves a diverse population and provides interpreting expertise in over eighty languages and dialects. We hope to share lessons we learn with other hospitals and work together to ensure patients needing language services receive them.”

“Our goal is to break down communications barriers to help ensure that all of our patients receive the best care possible,” said Kathryn Beattie, MD, chief medical officer at Valley Medical Center. “We believe effective communication is vital to patient safety, and this remarkable program will allow our staff to work with other hospitals across the nation and identify the best ways to improve care for our patients with limited or no English language skills.”

Led by RWJF, the Language QI Collaborative will be overseen by the Center for Health Care Quality at The George Washington University Medical Center School of Public Health and Health Services, which serves as the national program office for the Aligning Forces for Quality initiative.

For more information, visit [www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org) or [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).

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***The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation** focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to improving the health and health care of all Americans, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, meaningful and timely change. For more than 35 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org).*

***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. About 150 organizations participate in the Alliance, including Alaska Airlines, The Boeing Company, Starbucks, Puget Sound Energy, REI, the Washington State Health Care Authority, King County and many other employers, physician clinics, hospitals, consumer groups, unions and trusts, health plans, pharmaceutical companies and other organizations. For more information, visit [www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org). For an Alliance-produced report comparing local health care, go to [www.WACommunityCheckup.org](http://www.WACommunityCheckup.org).*