

Dear Community Member,

We are making good progress in the work to develop a public report measuring the quality of health care in the Puget Sound region. Our 2007 Business Plan adds preventive care and the treatment of asthma to the focus areas for quality improvement. We will also be developing approaches for how to address efficiency and patient satisfaction in the performance reports. Interest in the Alliance continues to grow and we are eager for everyone to join the effort. Please help spread the word by sharing this Update with your colleagues, friends and family.

To find out more about joining the Alliance, go to  
[www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/join/joinnow.cfm](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/join/joinnow.cfm).

*Margaret Stanley*  
Executive Director

### **Progress At-A-Glance**

Thanks to the hard work of the Board and many organizations and individuals volunteering time and expertise, the Alliance is making progress on numerous fronts. Recent Alliance achievements:

- ✓ **Reached agreement with 16 health plans, self-insured employers and union trusts to supply their data** to create the health care performance report. This reflects care provided to over 2 million people in the region!
- ✓ **Reviewed and shared with our Board comments from hundreds of physicians, employers, community groups and individuals on the Proposed Approach to Developing the Performance Report.** The Board and staff are working on several modifications to ensure that the report is as effective as possible for everyone.
- ✓ **Hired Michelle Seelig, M.D., to lead the Alliance's Health Information and Incentives efforts.** Dr. Seelig is a family physician with extensive experience in health information and quality improvement. She brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this critically important role.
- ✓ **Presented, along with Lloyd David, CEO of The Polyclinic, an overview of the Alliance at the national meeting of the American Medical Group Association,** which represents nearly 300 medical groups made up of about 80,000 physicians.

- ✓ **Adopted the final reports on Depression and on Low Back Pain from the two clinical improvement teams.** The reports recommend effective approaches to care, suggested ways to measure such care for the regional report, and strategies for how physicians, patients, health plans, and purchasers can help improve care.
- ✓ **Expressed to State lawmakers our opposition to “Any-Willing-Provider” proposals,** which limit health insurance companies’ ability to differentiate among providers, facilities, or services based on quality and efficiency.
- ✓ **Expressed to State lawmakers our support of recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Health Care Costs and Access.** This includes the expansion of the public report on health care performance; the use of evidence-based treatment guidelines; aligned incentives to encourage and reward health care improvement; greater adoption of health information technology; and tools that support informed decision making.
- ✓ **A Qualis Health Award of Excellence in Healthcare Quality will be awarded to Lance Heineccius,** who has been instrumental in helping to launch the Alliance and until last month served as Director of Information & Incentives. He is being honored for contributing to the improvement of healthcare by forging innovative approaches to complex challenges over the course of his three decades in the field. Way to go Lance!

### **Welcome to The Alliance!**

Since our last Update to you, several others have joined the Alliance: Bellevue Cardiology and Cardiac Strategies Company, Buckner Associates, Kitsap Children’s Clinic, Valley Medical Center, Vitreo Retinal Associates, Representative Cheryl Pflug, Dianna Blom, Alicia Caswell, Christopher Conner, JoAnn Green, Tom Greene, Denise Hess, Jan Hollingsworth, Cathleen O’Farrell, Elaine Sachter, Ginett Bailey, and David Weber. Welcome everyone!

### **Attention Doctors and Health Practitioners: Two Great Opportunities**

**Get National Recognition for the Quality Care You Provide:** The Alliance, in collaboration with the Department of Health, is encouraging doctors and other leaders to learn more about the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA) Diabetes and Heart/Stroke Physician Recognition programs and how to apply. These programs recognize physicians and clinics for providing quality care for patients, which in turn promotes changes that support community-wide improvement in health care quality. To learn more, contact Colette Rush

at [crush@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](mailto:crush@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org) or go to NCQA's website:  
<http://www.ncqa.org/PhysicianQualityReports.htm>.

**Get Ready for the Federal "NPI" Deadline:** May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2007, will be here before you know it—this is the date that federal HIPAA regulations require providers to have National Provider Identifiers (NPI) for use in transactions with health plans. Fortunately, OneHealthPort has developed the **Northwest NPI Service**, which is a FREE one-stop-shop for providers and medical practices to store their NPIs and look up NPI numbers for other providers. Health plans and large medical practices will use the service to gather NPI numbers to help with billing and payment. The Alliance will use this NPI data to correctly associate individual providers with each medical practice and/or clinic. Use the Northwest NPI Service to easily meet the federal deadline, while avoiding having to submit and resubmit NPI data to insurers and others! To do it now, go to [www.onehealthport.com](http://www.onehealthport.com). For more information, call OneHealthPort at 1-800-973-4797.

### **Other Opportunities for Everyone**

**Comment on National Standards to Evaluate PPO Health Plans** — We encourage everyone to send comments to the National Committee on Quality Assurance (NCQA) regarding their intention to evaluate Preferred Provider Organizations (PPOs) on the same set of standards, clinical measures and patient experience ratings that they now evaluate HMOs and Point-of-Service (POS) plans. More than 64.5 million Americans are enrolled in HMO and POS plans that report comprehensive data on their quality performance; however, more than 130 million people are enrolled in PPOs about which very little is reported. NCQA needs your input. Please send your opinions and suggestions to NCQA. Go to [www.ncqa.org/accred08/](http://www.ncqa.org/accred08/) **Comments are due to NCQA by March 30, 2007.**

**Enroll in Washington State's Prescription Drug Discount Program** — Every resident of this state – whether or not they have prescription drug coverage – can now get discounts on prescription drugs through the WA State Prescription Drug Program (WPDP). With a WPDP discount card, consumers can get specially discounted prices on prescription drugs through pharmacies including Safeway, Albertsons, ShopKo, Fred Meyer, Bi-Mart or QFC, or by mail-order through Wellpartner; or, from the new specialty pharmacy provider, BioScrip (for injectable drugs or other medications requiring special handling). There is no membership fee or special eligibility requirements. Anyone can sign up by calling 1-800-913-4146 or going to [www.rx.wa.gov](http://www.rx.wa.gov) for an enrollment form. Questions? Contact Ray Hanley at [Ray.Hanley@HCA.WA.GOV](mailto:Ray.Hanley@HCA.WA.GOV).

### **Upcoming Events**

**2007 Northwest Patient Safety Conference** — (3/22/07, Doubletree Hotel by SeaTac) Crucial to patient safety is effective communication. Learn leading edge ways to improve safety through asking the right questions, involving the right people in and considering cultural factors in getting to the “right” outcomes. For more information, go to [www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/resources/Events.html](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/resources/Events.html).

**The 4th Annual World HealthCare Congress** — (04/22-24, in Washington DC) At this conference, which brings together business and healthcare leaders to foster value, quality and consumer engagement, Alliance members will be speaking on a panel about the Alliance as an effective coalition. For more information, go to [www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/resources/Events.html](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org/resources/Events.html).

### **Other Health News**

**Improve Your Health Care** — Check out the new campaign to encourage and help consumers take a more active role in improving health care quality. Find information on reducing medical errors, talking with your clinician, planning for surgery and more, brought to you by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. And don't miss the entertaining videos, available online. Go to: <http://www.ahrq.gov/questionsaretheanswer/>.

**Patient, Protect Thyself** — Hospitals around the country are taking steps to reduce medical mistakes. But with so much at stake, many experts say patients and their families also need to take a larger role in ensuring their safety in the hospital. [Read more](#). *USA Today, February 5, 2007*

**The Importance of Knowing What the Doctor Is Talking About** — How often have you left a doctor's office wondering just what you were told about your health, or what exactly you were supposed to be doing to relieve or prevent a problem? If you are a typical patient, you remember less than half of what your doctor tries to explain. [Read more](#). *The New York Times, January 30, 2007*

*If you have suggestions about the content of this Update or would like to submit news to possibly include in future Updates, contact Diane Giese at (206)448-2570 ext 117 or [diane@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](mailto:diane@pugetsoundhealthalliance.org).*