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## **Puget Sound Health Alliance Catches National Eye: U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Meets with Alliance Leaders**

*Diverse group of regional leaders share common goals to improve value in health care*

SEATTLE, July 6, 2006 – The Secretary of the United States Department of Health and Human Services sat down with local leaders of the Puget Sound Health Alliance, to share his vision for improving health care and to find out more about how a community-wide vision is becoming a reality in the Puget Sound region. Leaders of organizations that belong to the Health Alliance met with Secretary Mike Leavitt in downtown Seattle, where they discussed the need to improve quality, affordability and patient experience in health care – and to get the public and physicians engaged in such efforts.

“We want to see health care comparison information in the hands of every patient, anyone who pays for care, and every doctor and hospital, so it’s no longer a mystery regarding who provides the most effective care in the most efficient manner,” said Secretary Mike Leavitt. “By producing public reports comparing health care quality and efficiency, the Puget Sound Health Alliance is connecting the dots while providing national leadership to improve quality and value for every dollar spent on health care.”

Margaret Stanley, executive director of the Puget Sound Health Alliance, said that as the Alliance progresses toward publishing the first regional comparison report on health care quality, expected in 2007, national interest in the Alliance grows. “The success of the Alliance is a tribute to the more than 100 organizations that have come to the table in the Puget Sound region to improve health care together,” noted Stanley. “Business leaders, unions, physicians, consumers and health plans, and others are ensuring that we make progress toward producing this valuable comparison report for

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the community.” Much of the progress, she added, is directly attributable to the leadership of many people, including the Alliance Board Chair, King County Executive Ron Sims. “The Puget Sound Health Alliance serves five counties and, across the region, we are seeing an inspiring level of dedication to creating and using public comparison reports and encouraging greater use of health information technology to improve the quality of care provided to the residents in our region.”

Secretary Leavitt shared with Alliance leaders the interest at the national level in reducing waste and inefficiency in health care, particularly through greater use of information technology such as electronic medical records. Local leaders described the Washington Health Information Collaborative, which will be awarding one million dollars this year to local doctors’ clinics and small hospitals to expand the use of information technology. For 2006, the funding for these awards came from First Choice Health and the Washington State Health Care Authority, with technical services provided by Qualis Health and the Puget Sound Health Alliance. As a multi-year commitment, the Alliance expects to see additional funding to encourage greater efficiency in health care coming from even more sources in the future.

### **About the U.S. Department of Health And Human Services**

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is the United States government's principal agency for protecting the health of all Americans and providing essential human services, especially for those who are least able to help themselves. The Department includes more than 300 programs, covering a wide spectrum of activities. Major health-related programs include Medicare (health insurance for elderly and disabled Americans) and Medicaid (health insurance for low-income people). For more information, go to [www.hhs.gov](http://www.hhs.gov).

### **About the Puget Sound Health Alliance**

The Puget Sound Health Alliance is a private, non-profit non-partisan organization – a team effort of those who provide, pay for and use health care services, working together to improve the quality of patient care for a healthier community, at a price more people can afford. More than 100 organizations from the public and private sectors have joined the Health Alliance, representing almost one million covered individuals. For more information, including a full list of Alliance organizational and individual participants, go to [www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org).

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