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**Puget Sound Health Alliance Hires Quality Assessment Expert**  
***Karen Onstad named Director of Health Information***

SEATTLE, June 11, 2008—The Puget Sound Health Alliance today announced that it has hired Karen Onstad, an expert with more than 15 years experience in quality assessment, to serve as the Alliance’s Director of Health Information. She will join the regional coalition mid-June.

Ms. Onstad formerly helped develop performance measures and products for the National Committee for Quality Assurance (NCQA) in Washington, DC. She served as Director of Policy and Product Development where she functioned as the internal expert on the Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS) policy issues. HEDIS is a tool used by more than 90 percent of America's health plans to measure performance on important dimensions of care and service. She also directed the HEDIS User's Group, authored annual volumes of HEDIS publications and staffed the Committee on Performance Measurement, the oversight body for HEDIS.

Most recently, Onstad has been an independent consultant specializing in quality assessment for a variety of clients including NCQA (National Committee for Quality Assurance), the National CAHPS Benchmarking Database (measuring patient experience), and URAC (also known as the American Accreditation HealthCare Commission). Another client was Minnesota Community Measurement, a regional coalition similar to the Health Alliance, for which Onstad developed patient experience measures.

“Bringing people the caliber of Karen Onstad to the Health Alliance will help us fulfill our mission, which is to improve health care quality, efficiency and affordability across the Puget Sound region,” Stanley said. “We’re excited to have a person with such a strong background in quality assessment joining us.”

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Onstad said she is looking forward to working for the Puget Sound Health Alliance: “The Alliance is well known for its ground-breaking work on health care performance assessment. The ability to measure effectiveness is crucial to improving health care quality in this region and across the nation. I am pleased to help the Alliance continually improve this vital work.”

Earlier in her career, she worked at Group Health Cooperative, Laguna Research Associates, and the Institute of Medicine. Onstad has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Minnesota and a Master of Public Health and Master of Public Policy from the University of California, Berkeley.

Over the past six months, the Health Alliance has achieved several important goals:

- In December it released the widely anticipated Community Checkup, a report that measured 21 types of care provided to patients in King, Snohomish, Pierce, Thurston and Kitsap counties. It examined diabetes, heart disease, depression, low back pain, use of generic drugs, use of antibiotics and prevention. The Health Alliance plans to release the second Community Checkup report later in 2008.
- In March, Secretary Mike Leavitt of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services named the Health Alliance as a Chartered Value Exchange, making the Alliance eligible to receive key Medicare information for its health care performance reporting.
- And, in early June the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation announced a \$1 million grant to the Health Alliance, as one of 14 coalitions across the nation selected for the Foundation’s new multi-million dollar initiative to improve local health care quality.

The Puget Sound Health Alliance is a non-profit made up of those who provide, pay for and use health care, working to improve quality of care at a price more people can afford. More than 50 individuals and 170 organizations have joined the Alliance, including employers, physician clinics, hospitals, consumer groups, unions and trusts, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, and other health organizations. For a list of Alliance members, go to [www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org). For the 'Community Checkup', go to [www.WACommunityCheckup.org](http://www.WACommunityCheckup.org).

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