

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

Community checkup: Room to improve

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After a smart lifestyle, good health depends in part on getting the most out of the medical system. A *new report* puts the central Puget Sound area in a better position to improve services by doctors, clinics and hospitals.

The **Puget Sound Health Alliance** has unveiled a "community checkup" report that tracks whether local residents are being treated according to best practices nationally in such critical areas as diabetes, asthma and heart conditions. It's a particularly useful tool for health care professionals, who are genuinely interested in doing their best, but it also has implications for consumers, employers and the region generally.

The Puget Sound region has a history of providing high-quality care with fewer hospitalizations than other parts of the country. The alliance is bolstering that tradition by compiling large amounts of data to see whether, for instance, physicians are prescribing effective asthma-control medications, performing the necessary tests for diabetes and avoiding use of antibiotics for colds.

While noting favorable comparisons to national averages, the alliance takes the reasonable view that there is room to improve for everyone. That will be particularly important as the country tries to improve health care while holding down expenses. We will all have roles to play in that effort.

On the Net: pugetsoundhealthalliance.org