

## Our region innovates again

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### HEALTH CARE

Our corner of the world has long been on the leading edge of health care innovation. Over the years, Puget Sound has been recognized as the best place to have a heart attack (not that we'd recommend it), as a world leader in cancer research and for delivering higher quality care at a lower cost.

The effort continues. One outstanding example is the **Puget Sound Health Alliance**, a partnership of the key players in health care -- doctors, hospitals, patients, employers, unions, health plans and others -- which was founded four years ago to increase the quality and value of health care. It's finding success by measuring health-care strategies, reporting on their results and working to reward good outcomes.

The idea is to shine a public light on how well various providers are doing in key areas like preventive care, management of chronic disease and the use of inexpensive generic drugs. The alliance issued a community checkup report in December (available at [WaCommunityCheckup.org](http://WaCommunityCheckup.org)) that allows health-care consumers to compare various providers for quality. It's easy to compare makes of cars, but never before have people been able to make such high-quality comparisons when it comes to their medical care.

Providers on the lower end of the scale have a clear incentive to improve. So do those on the upper end, though. Even if they achieved high scores in the treatment of diabetes or heart disease, for example, the report shows much better they still can do.

That's the power behind the alliance: a commitment by all involved to make the overall health-care system better. It's a commitment shared by the financial backing of major employers -- including Boeing, Snohomish County and the city of Everett -- and in-kind contributions of providers and others who provide medical and technical expertise. Snohomish County Council members were told Tuesday that the county's contribution of about \$30,000 is a wise one, given the impact to be leveraged against a \$26 million benefits budget.

Patients are well served when new ideas are shared, when best practices are identified and measured. Subscribers to health plans benefit when they're given incentives to get cancer screenings that are known to be effective. Employers win when prevention, effective treatment and smarter prescription drug choices lead to lower costs.

And everyone in a nation that still leads the world in health-care spending -- with disappointing results -- stands to benefit from yet another ground-breaking health-care effort from the Northwest.