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**Community Checkup: We Need to ‘Get the Basics Right’**

***Inaugural Puget Sound Health Alliance report finds medical groups, hospitals, insurers, employers, union trusts and patients must each do their part to improve health care quality and affordability***

SEATTLE, January 31, 2008—Doctors agree that people with heart disease and those with diabetes should be checked for dangerous cholesterol levels. Yet the Puget Sound Health Alliance’s first “Community Checkup”—based on a vast draw of data reflecting the care provided to more than 1.6 million patients in King, Pierce, Snohomish, Kitsap and Thurston counties—found opportunity for improvement in cholesterol checks and other basic services.

Bottom line: We all have work to do to make sure patients, especially those with chronic conditions, get the basic care that doctors agree is most effective.

“The Community Checkup is showing that across many basic medical services—like testing cholesterol, screening for colon cancer, and treating depression—some of us are not getting the care we need,” said David Fleming, M.D., chair of the Health Alliance Board and director of Public Health – Seattle and King County. “And this is a problem for all of us: doctors, patients, insurers and employers that buy health benefits. But by working together, as we have to create this report, we can begin to solve it.”

Release of the Community Checkup has been widely anticipated locally and nationally. The Puget Sound Health Alliance includes more than 160 organizations and 50 individuals from the region’s health care, business, government, and labor communities, plus people from the general public.

The Alliance was the first organization in the nation to be designated a Community Leader for Value-Driven Health Care by U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Mike Leavitt.

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Partial funding for the report came from King County and from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

“This first Community Checkup shows results only for clinics that volunteered to be included. We applaud these clinics as leaders in supporting quality improvement. Their participation has been vital to helping the Alliance develop the most comprehensive report of its kind for this region,” said Margaret Stanley, executive director of the Health Alliance.

The first Community Checkup shows results for 81 large clinic locations, which are part of 14 clinic systems that volunteered to be included in the inaugural report: Evergreen Health Care, Group Health, Minor & James Medical, MultiCare Health System, Northwest Physicians Network, Pacific Medical Centers, Providence Physician Group, Puget Sound Neighborhood Health Centers, Swedish Physicians, The Everett Clinic, The Polyclinic, UW Medicine Neighborhood Clinics, Valley Medical Center and Virginia Mason.

“Many physicians and other medical, health data and community experts have been actively involved in creating this report. This collaborative and open process has resulted in a Community Checkup that will be useful for all of our quality improvement efforts,” said Lloyd David, CEO/Executive Director of The Polyclinic.

The report measures 21 types of care provided to patients, in the areas of diabetes, heart disease, depression, low back pain, use of generic drugs, use of antibiotics and prevention. It is based on combined data from 14 health plans, union trusts and self-insured employers in the region. The data reflects care provided to about 70 percent of the insured, non-Medicare population in the five-county region, between January 2004 and December 2006. The data used to create the report does not include patients’ personally identifiable information, such as name or birthdate, nor does it include cost, charges or payment amounts.

The data used to generate the report comes from claims submitted by clinics for care that they

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delivered to patients. In the report, the Alliance acknowledges that the use of claims data for reporting is not perfect, however, the report was produced based on extensive analyses with several of the data suppliers and volunteer clinics to test the data and technical approach. Several clinic systems involved in the technical review process expressed confidence that the results appear to be reasonable and are useful in understanding overall performance, variation within the region, and opportunity for improvement across the community as a whole.

“We have never had access to this much information before, and it will be available to everyone as we work to provide quality care while controlling costs,” said King County Executive Ron Sims. “This is a remarkable picture of what's working, and what needs work, in our region's health care system.” Sims founded the Puget Sound Health Alliance, based on the vision of a task force he appointed in 2004, to analyze how to reform health care and control costs.

“I applaud the Puget Sound Health Alliance for their work completing the first Community Checkup report,” said Gov. Chris Gregoire. “This is exactly the kind of information that patients and their doctors should have to make informed health care choices and drive a higher-quality, more affordable health care system. It is no wonder that Washington serves as a national model and is leading the way to create solutions to transform the health care system.”

The first report creates a baseline to understand aspects of local health care. Initial results show everyone has room to improve. Compared to other communities reporting on the same types of measures, the results for Puget Sound look similar. In health care there are several decision points in the process so many people may influence a given result. A few examples:

- Across the region, about 20% of patients diagnosed with heart disease or diabetes did not have their cholesterol checked at least once during the year assessed.
- Only about 40% of patients taking a drug to lower cholesterol filled the prescription with a generic. Based on an Alliance analysis done in 2007, an increase of ten percentage points in the use of generics to lower cholesterol would save more than \$7 million in the region.

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- On the upside, more than 90% of children seen for the common cold were not given an unnecessary antibiotic. This may be due to community education efforts to help people understand that antibiotics are ineffective in treating the common cold.

Health Alliance officials stressed that everyone has a role in making necessary improvements:

- Doctors and other health care professionals should learn from each other and look at evidence-based approaches to improve the quality of care they provide to their patients;
- Health plans and clinics should share ideas on how to make, and support, improvement;
- Employers and other purchasers should ensure that the benefits they provide or purchase cover the basics of effective health care; and,
- Patients should talk with their doctors about what they need to do to stay healthy.

“With this report, we have a baseline understanding of where we are as a community,” Stanley said. “Together, we all need to make changes to improve local health care. A rising tide lifts all boats, and that is exactly what we are trying to do in the area of quality improvement—lift the quality of care for everyone in the region.”

Puget Sound Health Alliance officials said they anticipate releasing a second Community Checkup later in 2008. Future reports will expand over time to cover additional measures and date suppliers, in addition to showing results for all large clinic locations in the five counties. “Knowing how well we are doing now is essential for doing better in the future. And with each additional Community Checkup report, we will be better able to identify trends and improve the quality of care in our region,” said Dr. Fleming.

The Puget Sound Health Alliance is a non-profit made up of those who provide, pay for and use health care, working together to improve quality of care at a price more people can afford. More than 50 individuals and 160 organizations have joined the Alliance, including Boeing, Starbucks, Puget Sound Energy, REI, Washington Mutual, WA State Health Care Authority, King County and many other employers, physician clinics, hospitals, consumer groups, unions and trusts, health plans, pharmaceutical companies, and other health organizations. See [www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org](http://www.pugetsoundhealthalliance.org). For the full report, go to [www.WACommunityCheckup.org](http://www.WACommunityCheckup.org)

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### **Additional Quotes about the Community Checkup**

***In addition to those quoted in the media release and those who will speak at the press conference, below please find other quotes about the Alliance's Community Checkup with contact information for follow up.***

"We agree with the Alliance's goal of helping the whole community – including patients and employers – promote effective health care, support quality improvement and become more informed health care purchasers. The Community Checkup Report complements the WSMA's Education and Research Foundation's quality improvement program (Quip) available privately to individual physicians, which draws from the same evidence based guidelines for certain conditions."

**Brian Wicks, MD** -- President, **Washington State Medical Association**

To contact: call or email Jennifer Hanscom at (206) 441-9762 or [jgl@wsma.org](mailto:jgl@wsma.org)

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"The regular reports of clinical performance to our community is an important first step in the consistent delivery of quality health care. This important information will be used to systematically improve care for our region and will demonstrate that these collaborative efforts can result in better care at lower costs for everyone."

**Hugh Straley, M.D.** -- **Group Health Permanente** and Medical Director of Group Health Cooperative     To contact: call or email Mike Foley at (206) 448.4148 or [foley.m@ghc.org](mailto:foley.m@ghc.org)

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"Preparing the Puget Sound Health Alliance Community Checkup was a monumental undertaking. The level of data compiling and reconciling around ambulatory performance measures was unprecedented. As with any data gathering effort, it required careful analysis and many reviews to make sure the information was complete and thorough. Our team at Virginia Mason is impressed with the commitment of the Alliance staff. We look forward to working together to refine and expand the report, which will further strengthen our quality improvement efforts and benefit our patients."

**David F. Dreis, M.D.** -- Medical Director, Clinical Outcomes, **Virginia Mason Medical Center**

To contact: call or email Alisha Mark at 206-341-1509 or [Alisha.Mark@vmmc.org](mailto:Alisha.Mark@vmmc.org)

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"This report represents a quantum leap in outpatient reporting. We at MultiCare Health System applaud the diligence with which the Alliance has approached the data analysis and the willingness of the Alliance to refine its analytical methods. We look forward to an ongoing partnership in order to continue to develop the methodology so our communities can have the most accurate data available on their health care. More importantly, this information will lead

health care consumers to become more involved in their own health care and more informed about the choices they make regarding their health and their health care. We at MultiCare are committed to quality patient care."

**Smokey Stover, M.D.** -- Vice President, **MultiCare Health System**

To contact: email [Todd.Kelley@multicare.org](mailto:Todd.Kelley@multicare.org) or call 253-403-1716

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"Publication of the region's first 'Community Checkup' represents the first in a long series of changes intended to bring consumers and purchasers of health care services into a sphere of influence for health systems change never before allowed by the industry. The community checkup will help to illustrate in a common language that there are very serious problems with the way we finance and deliver medical care in this country. Variable performance on measures of good care across provider groups in an area as small as central Puget Sound is largely a symptom of system chaos and perverse incentives which influence the way in which patients receive care. The community checkup is a milestone for helping to move hidden issues blocking substantive health care reform into the light of day."

**Rick MacCornack, PhD** – Dir of Quality Improvement, **Northwest Physicians Network**

To contact: email [rmaccornack@npnwa.net](mailto:rmaccornack@npnwa.net) or call (253) 207-4341

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"It's exciting to be a participant in the collaborative 'Community Checkup'. The dynamic of purchasers, healthcare practitioners, hospitals, consumers, and health plans working together to improve our community's healthcare is worthy of all our support. As a community, we have a tremendous opportunity to collectively promote evidence-based care while enhancing the overall healthcare experience."

**Ze'ev Young, M.D.** -- Chief Medical Officer & Vice President, **First Choice Health**

To contact: call or email David Endicott at (206) 409-3275 or [david@davidendicott.us](mailto:david@davidendicott.us)

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"Tools like this create a common set of quality benchmarks for large health care purchasers like the State of Washington and Boeing. This has a ripple effect as our contracting providers follow these criteria, and adopt them as a way of doing their business. In turn, their quality practices spread throughout the industry."

**Steve Hill** -- Administrator, **Washington State Health Care Authority**

To contact: call or email Dave Wasser at (360) 923-2711; [dave.wasser@hca.wa.gov](mailto:dave.wasser@hca.wa.gov)

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"Boeing is pleased to be part of such a positive collaborative effort of purchasers, payers, providers and consumers of health care in the development of the Community Checkup. The release of this report is a giant step toward transparency of health care information and providing employees with quantitative data to make more informed health care decisions."

**Greg Marchand** -- HR Business Development, **The Boeing Company**

Contact: Chris Villiers at (206)766-2916 or [christopher.m.villiers@boeing.com](mailto:christopher.m.villiers@boeing.com)

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“This report is the first step in getting important information into the hands of everyday people. We need to encourage everyone to talk to their doctors and to speak up about their care. With the information in this report, patients now have a tool to talk with doctors to make sure they are getting the care that has been proven to be most effective.”

**Larry Brown** -- Legislative Dir, Aerospace Machinists 751, **International Assoc of Machinists (IAM)** To contact: email [larryb@iam751.org](mailto:larryb@iam751.org) or call (206) 764-0306

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“Everyone in the Puget Sound region deserves top-tier health care, and this report is a great first step in improving the quality of care across the board. UFCW’s involvement with the Puget Sound Health Alliance has already helped us as we created new benefits designed to help the participants in our Taft-Hartley trust live healthier lives, prevent illness and make informed decisions about their healthcare. By working together as a community and sharing information and insights, we can make sure that everyone has the information they need to take become an active participant in their care.”

**Diane Zahn**  
Secretary/Treasurer, **United Food & Commercial Workers Union Local 21**  
To contact: email [dzahn@ufcw21.org](mailto:dzahn@ufcw21.org) or call (206) 436-6576

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“We believe providing cost and quality information to health care consumers is critical in transforming health care. That is why we create tools at Regence to empower and reward members for being active participants in their care. Regence applauds the Alliance's work to provide the public with clear information about the degree to which evidence-based medical guidelines are followed. We have decided to use the quality reports from the Alliance, rather than relying on our own analyses.”

**Mary McWilliams** -- President, **Regence BlueShield**  
To contact: call or email Lee Tucker Therriault at (206) 332-6205 or  
[lee.therriault@regence.com](mailto:lee.therriault@regence.com)

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“By combining the guidance of Puget Sound area physicians with data and efforts of multiple health plans and employers, the Alliance's Community Checkup report has the potential to promote further gains in regional healthcare quality.”

**Audrey Halvorson** -- Chief Actuary, **Premera Blue Cross** & Alliance Board member  
To contact: call or email Mark Stuart at (425) 918-3297 or [Mark.Stuart@PREMERA.com](mailto:Mark.Stuart@PREMERA.com)

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“Businesses are increasingly interested in efforts to make our health care system more transparent. And that's just what the Puget Sound Health Alliance, with it's unprecedented access to data, is doing. The Community Checkup and public reports like it are the key to creating a value-driven health care system, one that brings needed information to consumers.”

**Steve Mullin** -- CEO, Business Roundtable  
To contact: email [Steve@waroundtable.com](mailto:Steve@waroundtable.com) or call (206) 623-0180

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“The *Puget Sound Community Checkup* released today by the Puget Sound Health Alliance marks an important step forward in improving health care in the Seattle Region. Measuring and publicly reporting on the performance of clinics and their doctors is critical to the drive to lift the quality of care for everyone. This information helps both doctors and their patients do a better job. It helps doctors know where they can improve their performance. And it helps patients better understand that even in high-quality communities such as Seattle, there are differences in the available care and they need to take a greater role in their own health care, from the way they select their providers to the way they manage their chronic conditions.

Seattle is one of 14 communities the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation chose last year for its Aligning Forces for Quality initiative, which works with broad-based teams in each individual community to improve the quality of the care for patients with chronic conditions. I thank the Puget Sound Health Alliance for its continued national leadership on health care improvement and for the careful way it has worked to build consensus within Seattle for health improvement. We are all better for it.”

**Risa Lavizzo-Mourey, M.D.** -- President & CEO, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
To contact: email Minna Jung at [MJUNG@rwjf.org](mailto:MJUNG@rwjf.org)

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"I am pleased to congratulate the Puget Sound Health Alliance, the first HHS-designated Community Leader for Value-Driven Health Care, on its continued leadership in working to bring about high quality care and better value for the citizens of our region."

**James Whitfield** -- Deputy Director, **U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**  
To contact: [James.Whitfield@HHS.gov](mailto:James.Whitfield@HHS.gov)