

Puget Sound Health Alliance gears up for second local provider report card

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SEATTLE - Puget Sound Health Alliance are set to release a second local provider report card to the public in November. The report, with data gleaned from electronic health records, will show results of care for patients with diabetes, heart disease, depression and asthma.* The report follows the [Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Michael Leavitt](#)'s call last week to increase transparency of quality and pricing of care across the country.

According to the Alliance, its first Community Checkup report, published in January 2008, showed results for 14 medical groups and their 81 clinic locations in King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston counties. The next report is expected to include results for about 45 medical groups and more than 200 clinic locations in the same five counties. Physician leaders and clinic administrators across the Puget Sound region are reviewing draft results of the report called a Community Checkup.

"With this significant addition of medical groups, we are building on the pioneering work of the 14 medical groups who volunteered to be the first to show their results publicly back in January," said Mary McWilliams, executive director of the Puget Sound Health Alliance. "The next Community Checkup report will expand healthcare transparency for the region. This private review of draft results by medical groups now is a crucial step to ensure that the public report will continue to be a reliable tool for everyone to help improve healthcare quality."

The second report builds on the first, said Robert Mecklenburg, MD, chairman of the Alliance's Quality Improvement Committee and medical director of the Center for Healthcare Solutions at Virginia Mason Medical Center. "With the addition of the second report, we are making further progress in establishing a sound baseline for assessing the quality of care in our region into the future."

Community Checkup reports published in 2009 and beyond will be used to identify trends and begin tracking improvement over time, Mecklenburg said.

Karen Onstad, director of health information for the Health Alliance, said the organization is using secure Web-based portals to share data with physicians and administrators for review prior to publishing the report. "Having the secure, Web-based portal allows us to efficiently share data from a much larger number of clinics," Onstad said. "This is a major improvement to the manual approach we used last time which required that we e-mail password-protected spreadsheets to each medical group."

* Correction: the second Community Checkup report will be based on claims or encounter data submitted by 16 health plans and self-insured employers and union trusts.

HHS has endorsed 14 local organizations, or chartered value exchanges (CVEs) - including the Puget Sound Health Alliance - but plans to expand to 25 by January.

CVEs are community-based collaboratives of providers, employers, health plans and consumers that can help organize the current U.S. healthcare sector into a healthcare system, [Leavitt](#) said. HHS is granting CVEs access to electronic [Medicare](#) records for analysis purposes.

"We need national standards, but local control," [Leavitt](#) said at a recent town hall meeting organized by the North Carolina Healthcare Information and Communications Alliance, Inc. (NCHICA) and the WNC Health Network.