

Overview: Community Checkup Report

The Community Checkup is the most comprehensive report on health care performance ever produced for and about the Puget Sound region including King, Kitsap, Pierce, Snohomish and Thurston counties. It gives *you* the power to help improve the complex and often vexing health care ‘system.’ That’s true whether you are a patient, a doctor or other health care practitioner, a health professional working in a hospital or health plan, or looking at this as an employer, union trust or other purchaser of health care services.

Decisions that we each make affect our health as individuals and health care overall. Decisions made by medical groups, hospitals, health plans and purchasers help shape the quality and cost – the overall value – of health care in this community. We all benefit from each of us making more informed decisions that promote and support effective, safe and affordable health care. Together we can accomplish far more improvement in local health care than any one doctor, medical group, hospital, patient, health plan, employer or union could do by themselves.

According to a 2008 survey by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, people living with chronic conditions in this region generally trust their doctors and hospitals and feel they get good care. However, that doesn’t mean that every patient follows their doctors’ advice nor is everyone doing what is needed to stay as healthy as possible. According to Commonwealth Fund research, even though the United States spends more on health care than any other country, we place last among 19 industrialized countries in the number of deaths that could have been prevented by access to effective health care. This cannot be blamed on any single group or individual, as the lack of high-value health care could be due to physicians not suggesting effective care that is well established in nationally agreed-upon medical guidelines, or patients not following their doctors’ advice, insurance not covering the needed (and effective) service and/or employers not purchasing the coverage or encouraging employees and their families to get and stay healthy, and so on. We each make decisions that affect value in our health care system. This Community Checkup report reflects how we all are doing to promote the best health and health care in those areas of focus included in this report.

Updated and Expanded.

This Community Checkup report shows performance results grouped by key health conditions or types of service, categorized by medical group or hospital. The early Community Checkup report produced in January 2008 was our trial run effort to measure health care performance for care provided by doctors’ offices, testing methodology and showing results for 14 medical groups who volunteered to be named in the report. Since then, we’ve refined the data analysis further, improving the stability of the results. The updated and expanded report reflects more current data and shows results for 47 medical groups and more than 170 clinic locations. It also now includes measures and results for 30 hospitals in the five counties, making the Community Checkup report the one place to go to get information about care delivered at both clinics and hospitals.

This November 2008 Community Checkup report is intended to establish a baseline against which to compare changes in health care performance across the region as evidenced by results shown in Community Checkup reports produced in 2009 and beyond.

Contents of the Report.

This Community Checkup report includes information on care provided in medical groups or doctors' offices, plus a segment devoted to measures of care provided in hospitals in the region. Both of these sections start with an executive summary of the report findings to reveal insights from the data and results, including how the Puget Sound region compares to national benchmarks, when such data are available. Each section then shows specific results associated with each medical group and each hospital, in addition to specific actions that should be taken by patients, physicians, hospitals, health plans, employers, union trusts and others to do their share to improve results in the future. For help with understanding how the results are shown in this report, see the chart legend starting on page 170. For even more technical documents about developing this report, go to www.wacommunitycheckup.org/?p=report_info.

Due to the comprehensive nature of this Community Checkup report – which includes 21 measures of medical group care and 41 measures of hospital care for as many as 200 health care facilities – it is impractical to include all of the results in a printed report. But on this website, www.WACommunityCheckup.org, you can see, search and sort all of the results based on your areas of interest, health conditions or geographic location.

Using this Report.

The Community Checkup report will be improved and expanded over time. Everyone is encouraged to use the report to learn more about specific health services that we believe are effective and to see that there is variation in how consistently effective care is provided in clinics and hospitals across the region. This foundational issue of the Community Checkup report should be used by medical groups and hospitals to see which of their peers appear to be high performers, and then to talk with each other to learn about promising approaches to improve the consistency of providing high value health care. Patients are encouraged to use the report to look up their clinic or hospital to learn about effective care that is right for them, talk with their doctors and other health care team members to get advice about their health and health care, then follow-through with that advice to be as healthy as possible.

Future Community Checkup reports will be updated and published over time to highlight improvement and to 'shine the light' on areas in which greater attention is needed. No longer will patients, doctors, hospitals, employers, unions, health plans and others be forced to search several places to find important comparisons – the Community Checkup is intended to be the best single resource for performance results for medical groups and their clinic locations, hospitals and eventually health plans and possibly others.

Community Checkup reports produced in 2008 are intended to be used solely for individual, organizational and community-wide learning, discussion and support for quality improvement. All persons and organizations are prohibited from using the information for any business purpose, including but not limited to establishing networks, designing employee benefit packages, negotiating contracts, advertising or marketing.

Future Reports.

Over time, the Community Checkup report will be expanded to be even more valuable for the entire community. Eventually, we would like the report to include:

- More measures of care provided by medical groups or doctors' offices, in large part following the recommendations of national groups such as the National Quality Forum
- More measures of care provided in hospitals, drawing from measures and results produced by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Leapfrog Group, the Washington State Department of Health and others
- Measures of health plan performance, drawing from sources such as the eValue8 program of the National Business Coalition on Health
- Measures of patient experience with care provided by medical groups or doctors' offices, drawn from surveys completed by the patients themselves
- Measures of efficiency or resource use across an episode of care, as a first step in assessing the relative 'cost' of care provided by different clinics or hospitals
- Expanding measures of health care quality by drawing from sources beyond claims or administrative data, including data from lab records and medical charts

With the consistent improvement and expansion of the Community Checkup report over time, the Alliance is committed to helping the Puget Sound community realize the vision of everyone being able to make well-informed health care decisions that emphasize and reinforce high value, effective and affordable care. Today, the report should be used to be aware that there is (sometimes quite significant) variation in care among medical groups and clinics, and among hospitals. Use the report as the basis for discussion to make sure that we each get effective care that improves health or prevents worsening illness.

We envision that future Community Checkup reports, beyond 2008, will be used not only to recognize and encourage high-value care, but also for patients to make decisions about where to access effective care, and for others to decide which types of care are most appropriate to encourage and reward through benefit design and other contracting incentives.

Important Considerations About this Report.

This Community Checkup is the opinion of the Alliance. This is a leading edge report for the region based on more comprehensive data than has ever been amassed and analyzed for use by health care practitioners and the public. It is important to recognize that the medical group and clinic results were calculated based on many technical and analytical decisions that

required the judgment of numerous experts. And, yes, even experts sometimes disagree about the best approach. Others who use their own technical processes to apply the same ambulatory measures to their own data may reach different conclusions than the medical group and clinic results shown in this report.

This Community Checkup is not medical advice and is not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. If you have any concerns or questions about your health or treatment, you should always consult your doctor or other health care provider. Never disregard, or delay obtaining, medical advice or assistance because of something you read in this report.

Also be aware that the results for certain measures are affected by factors beyond the control of the doctor, health provider or hospital. For example, a patient still may not follow through with a particular course of treatment even if recommended by the doctor or provider and fully explained to the patient.

The measures in this report look at just a subset of all the health care that is provided. The results for medical groups and clinics focus largely on care provided by primary care physicians because that is where the medical community and community leaders have reached broad agreement about what is most effective to keep people as healthy as possible. There are other ways to assess health care quality; however, so far none have surfaced that allow systematic, standardized measurement across the entire health care delivery system for the whole population.

For the medical group measures, the content is based on claims or billing data which we believe is the best data currently and consistently available in electronic format across all clinics or medical practices at this time. To the extent possible, we have applied leading edge technical processes and analysis to create this report, based on consensus among physician leaders and other regional and national experts. Given the complexity of health care and the large amount of information still kept in difficult-to-access paper folders and files in clinics, there is no “perfect” approach to measuring and reporting on health care value in the region. Fortunately, the Community Checkup report is a solid step forward in the journey toward making sure the public has useful information, with a shared commitment among doctors, hospitals, employers, insurers, patients and others to improve how we all measure and report health care performance over time.

About the Alliance

The Puget Sound Health Alliance was formed as a non-profit, non-partisan regional collaborative in 2004, with the vision of developing a state-of-the-art health care system that provides better care at a more affordable cost, resulting in healthier people in the Puget Sound region. Today, our mission is to build a strong alliance among patients, doctors and other health care providers, hospitals, employers, unions and health plans to promote health and improve quality and affordability. The Alliance’s approach includes several activities to improve health, quality and cost:

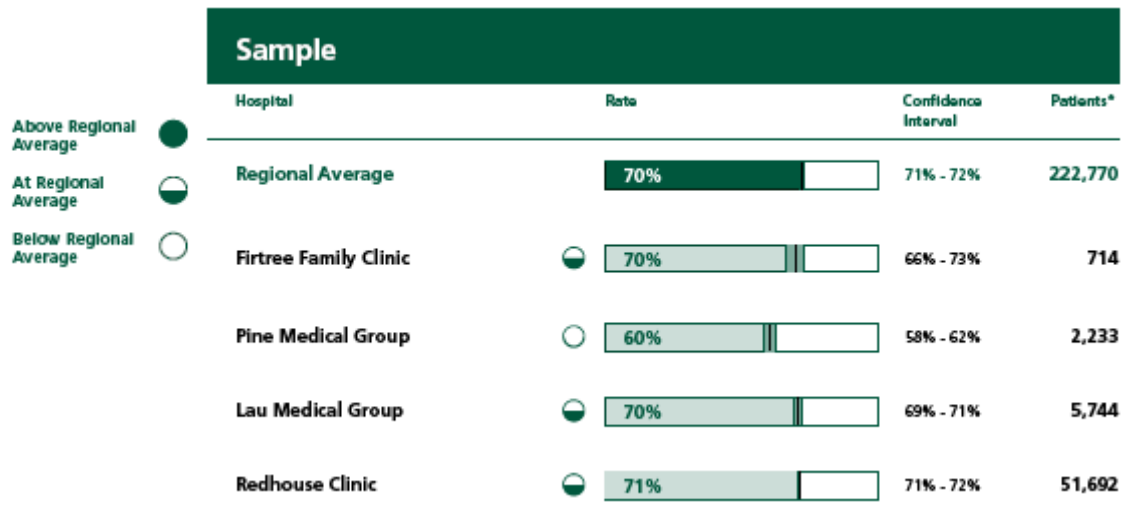
- promoting preventive care;
- improving the management of chronic disease;
- using evidence to guide doctors and patients to make high-value health care decisions;
- reducing duplicative or unnecessary care; and,
- measuring and reporting how often patients get key elements of effective care, to gauge how well we are all doing in this region and to support and encourage improvement.

It is in the context of this final area of emphasis that the Alliance has developed the regional Community Checkup report so that everyone in the community has comparative information that recognizes and encourages health care services and actions that are safe, effective in promoting or improving health, and affordable so everyone can access needed care.

To see all results in the Community Checkup report, go to www.WACommunityCheckup.org
 For more information about the Alliance, go to www.PugetSoundHealthAlliance.org

Chart Legend

The descriptions below explain the elements in the chart of results for each measure.



Regional Average: (Upper left corner of the chart)

This result is based on all data for the entire five-county region, including care provided within medical groups or at individual clinics or hospitals that are listed in the report and those that are not listed. For some measures, the regional average is high and for others the regional average is low. It is shown for comparison purposes only and is the basis for the rating symbol; however, the regional average is not a target or goal. For all care provided in the region, we believe that everyone has room to improve.

Names of Medical Groups, Clinics or Hospitals: (Listed on the left side of the chart)

This is the list of the health care group or facility that is large enough (e.g. six or more clinicians at a clinic location) and for which we have enough data to meet the minimum sample size. See the description of the “patients” column below.

Rate Symbols: (Symbols next to each organization name)

The symbols help give a general assessment of each organization’s rate at a glance. The filled circle means that the rate (the full range from lower to upper confidence bounds) for that medical group, clinic or hospital is entirely above the regional average. The open circle means that the rate for that medical group, clinic or hospital is entirely below the regional average. The half-filled circle is used when the rate is in a range that crosses the regional average.

Rate:

The number shown is the likely percentage of patients for that medical group, clinic or hospital who received the recommended care during the measurement period. For example, a rate of “85” means that 85% of patients at that facility likely received the recommended care while 15% did not. From a statistical standpoint, it is important to note that the rate is the midpoint of a range and there is 95% certainty that the actual rate is somewhere in that range (see below).

Range (0 to 100 scale):

The range shows the rate for each medical group, clinic or hospital as the midpoint. All rates were calculated using a 95% confidence interval. The size of the range is affected by the amount of data (i.e., the number of patients) used to calculate each rate.

Confidence Interval:

The rates are shown as a “range” with a mid-point, calculated using a 95% confidence interval. The size of the actual range or “error rate” will depend on the number of patients in the denominator for each measure.

Patients:

This number reflects the amount of data or sample size on which the rate was calculated. For care provided in medical groups and clinics, rates were calculated only when there was data to reflect care provided to at least 160 patients and only at clinics where there were at least six physicians or other clinicians.