



Dear member,

Welcome to the first issue of the Washington Health Alliance Purchaser Update. Each month, we'll be sending you a short newsletter full of resources to help with your benefit design strategy and tools you can use to make your workforce healthier. We will highlight studies, reports and articles that have an impact on your work, and provide ready-to-use employee communications about Choosing Wisely™ and Own Your Health topics.

We welcome your feedback on the newsletter, as well as potential contributions. If you have suggestions on how the newsletter might be improved or for articles that other purchasers should see, please send them to [John Gallagher](#).

#### **Thank you to eValue8 participants!**

Thank you to all the purchasers who participated in this year's eValue8™ meetings. Because of your engagement, the discussions with the five participating plans were thoughtful and illuminating. The process is your opportunity to signal to the plans your areas of greatest interest and to see how the plans respond. A final summary of the eValue8 results will be available early next month.

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## **PURCHASER LIBRARY**

### **Moving Markets: Lessons from New Hampshire's Health Care Price Transparency Experiment**

Another reminder of the value of APCDs is [this report issued in April by the California HealthCare Foundation and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation](#). Perhaps the most important finding from the report was about how transparency transformed the market. Without the initial investment in public price transparency, many respondents believed that changes in benefit design and introduction of price-shopping tools in the private sector would have gained little traction.

### **Successful Use of Reference Pricing for Hip and Knee Replacements in California**

A study by AHRQ on [reference pricing for total hip and knee replacement surgery in California](#) concluded that the pricing policy significantly increased the proportion of enrollees choosing high-value hospitals. The policy also encouraged hospitals not receiving this designation to lower their price. Together, these changes generated a 26 percent reduction in the average price paid and cumulative two-year savings of \$5.5 million. Patients choosing high-value facilities reported being satisfied with the level of care they received.

### **How Colorado Used Its APCD to Analyze Regional Disparities in Premium Costs**

Colorado's resort communities pay higher insurance rates than other parts of the state, leading the state to look for potential solutions. The state's APCD, run by the Center for Improving Value in Health Care (CIVHC), provided data that allowed the state's Division of Insurance to look at what was driving the cost of care, and thus premiums. [Read how the APCD revealed the underlying cause for premium cost disparities in Colorado.](#)

### **Using Value-Based Benefit Design for Specialty Pharma**

As health care decision-makers grapple with how to ensure access to specialty medications, the University of Michigan Center for Value-Based Insurance Design ([V-BID Center](#)) and the National Pharmaceutical Council ([NPC](#)) have released a new report, "[Supporting Consumer Access to Specialty Medications Through Value-Based Insurance Design](#)," that explores how value-based insurance design (V-BID) could be utilized as a solution to address specialty medication access concerns.

### **How the Millennial Generation Is Transforming Employee Benefits**

According to a number of recent studies, the millennial generation, today's incoming young-adult employees, shows far more interest than older generations in a broad spectrum of employee benefits to protect them from various life risks. They are more cautious than boomers or Gen Xers in choosing their financial portfolios and more focused on planning for their long-term future. Millennials even value health insurance almost as much as older adults—despite the fact they're much less likely to use it. These are among the findings outlined in [a new \*Benefits Quarterly\* article.](#)

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## **HEALTHY WORKFORCE RESOURCES**

Each month, we will share materials from our Own Your Health and Choosing Wisely® initiatives that you can use in your employee communications. Feel free to use any or all of these suggested messages as they meet your needs.

### **Your primary care doctor**

Owning your health starts with finding a primary care provider you trust. Your primary care doctor is your partner in health. Learn more about who can be your primary care provider, when to search for a primary care provider and how to choose the right provider for you. [Learn more about finding a primary care provider.](#)

### **Stay safe on your bike**

Wear your helmet tightly and use protective eyewear. Use bright front and rear lights. Keep your bike tuned up, brakes adjusted and tubes fully inflated. Follow the rules of the road and don't rely on people always seeing you. [Read more tips for taking care of yourself.](#)

## Talk with your provider about the tests, treatments and procedures you really need

Five questions you should ask your doctor before you have any test or procedure:

1. Do I really need this test or procedure?
2. What are the downsides?
3. Are there simpler, safer options?
4. What happens if I do nothing?
5. How much does it cost?

[Download the Choosing Wisely wallet card today.](#)

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## NEWS TO KNOW

### [Boeing, Providence-Swedish and UW Medicine Form ACO | \*The Seattle Times\*](#)

Boeing, Providence-Swedish and UW Medicine are teaming up to offer an accountable care organization (ACO) for Boeing employees, providing what they say will be higher-quality, more affordable care.

### [Hospital Charges Surge for Common Ailments, Data Shows | \*The New York Times\*](#)

Charges for some of the most common inpatient procedures surged at hospitals across the country in 2012 from a year earlier, some at more than four times the national rate of inflation, according to data released by Medicare officials.

### [I.R.S. Bars Employers from Dumping Workers Into Health Exchanges | \*The New York Times\*](#)

Many employers had thought they could shift health costs to the government by sending their employees to a health insurance exchange with a tax-free contribution of cash to help pay premiums, but the Obama administration has squelched the idea in a new ruling.

### [Everett Clinic Posts Prices Online for Some Services | \*The Seattle Times\*](#)

The Everett Clinic is taking a step toward more transparency in health care by posting prices of common procedures. The first prices it will list involve such imaging services as X-rays and MRIs.

## LEARN MORE

### **Own Your Health**

The Own Your Health campaign empowers you to become an active participant in your own health care. The Own Your Health website provides trustworthy information, helpful tips and handy tools to help you take control of your health. Washington Health Alliance partners with organizations to create custom Own Your Health campaigns specific to your audience. [Learn more.](#)

### **Visit the Community Checkup website**

The Community Checkup is our annual report highlighting health care quality and value at medical groups and hospitals in Washington state. Providers use the data to discover areas for improvement, and consumers to help choose a primary care home. The community as a whole sees the report as a critical component in the overall effort to transform the health care system. The report demonstrates that everyone has room to improve. [Learn more.](#)

**Follow the Alliance on Twitter**

We invite you to follow the Alliance on Twitter [@WAHealthCheckup](#).

*For comments about the Update for Purchasers or to change your email address or unsubscribe, please email John Gallagher, Director of Communication and Development.*

*The Washington Health Alliance brings together those who give, get and pay for health care to create a high-quality, affordable system for the people of Washington state.*

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