



Members of the Alliance are taking great strides in improving the value of health care in Washington state by reducing costs and increasing quality. For example, [EvergreenHealth](#) is part of a growing trend in our region to make price information more transparent by voluntarily posting prices for common procedures online. And, a multi-stakeholder group, convened by the Alliance, is moving into the next stage of development of the [Washington State Common Measure Set for Health Care Quality and Cost](#), an effort that will align measurement efforts at the state level, and help our state move together toward higher quality care.

PURCHASER LIBRARY

[Expanding Vaccine Coverage for Your Workforce: A Primer for Employers](#)

The Affordable Care Act requires that all recommended immunizations must be covered without patient cost-sharing. In an effort to increase uptake of often-overlooked adult vaccines, the National Business Coalition on Health has developed a primer for employers to help expand vaccine coverage in their workforce.

[Value-Based Payment Is Spreading, but Models Need Refinement](#)

Approximately 40 percent of payments by private plans to health care providers are now tied to “value,” meaning they are linked to better or less costly care, rather than the volume of services provided. However, evaluations of payment reforms to date have generally found mixed results, though there have been some promising examples. The Commonwealth Fund suggests seven improvements based on behavioral economic principles to enhance the effectiveness of value-based payment. They’ve also launched a new initiative, [Incentives 2.0](#), to help uncover and disseminate both financial and non-financial incentives to promote higher-value health care.

[National Trends in the Cost of Employer Health Insurance Coverage, 2003–2013](#)

Premiums for family coverage increased 73 percent over the past decade—faster than median family income. Employees’ contributions to their premiums climbed by 93 percent over that time frame. At the same time, deductibles more than doubled in both large and small firms. Workers are thus paying more but getting less protective benefits.

[Caution to Employers: Don’t Masquerade Cost Shifting as Savings](#)

When evaluating the merits of a private exchange, one industry insider suggests pursuing an overall financial strategy built around achieving “true savings” rather than simply shifting costs onto employees—a warning that has been sounded for years in the traditional marketplace.

[Tests and treatments your employees may not need](#)

This short fact sheet from Consumer Reports and ABIM’s Choosing Wisely program outlines guidelines to consider when sending workers or job candidates to the doctor. In particular, the tests or treatments they may not need which may not improve their health, and could actually pose some risk.

Unequal treatment where employers use quality control to shape healthcare

Employer-provided coverage is the backbone of the U.S. health system, with more than half of Americans getting insurance through work. Most businesses, however, are reluctant to manage medical providers as they might other key suppliers. It's different in the Puget Sound region. Boeing and other major employers here, including Starbucks and Costco, have aggressively pushed local hospitals and doctors to meet the kinds of rigorous standards they use to build airplanes or brew coffee.

HEALTHY WORKFORCE RESOURCES

Each month we share materials from our Own Your Health, Choosing Wisely® and other 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 is your partner in health

Your primary care doctor is your health care partner for preventive care and medical treatment. The best time to search for a primary care provider is when you are feeling well and have the time and energy to figure out the right match for you. That way, when you need medical care, you'll know right where to go. [Learn more.](#)

Overuse of imaging tests

MRIs, CT scans and other forms of high-resolution imaging are great tools to assist doctors in diagnosing disease. The problem is that they are used too often, for too many reasons. For low back pain, uncomplicated headaches and sinusitis, these tests don't always make sense. [Learn more.](#)

NEWS TO KNOW

[Big, new trend in health care: Telling patients how much their care will cost | Puget Sound Business Journal](#)

[EEOC takes aim at wellness programs increasingly offered by employers | PBS News Hour](#)

[Wellness at work: Popular but unproven | Kaiser Health News](#)

[Consumers stuck with medical bills for treatments they don't remember getting | Business Wire](#)

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.](#)

Choosing Wisely

Choosing Wisely® is a campaign designed to provide easy-to-understand guides for getting better, safer, more effective care. It is a partnership between the Alliance, The American Board of Internal Medicine (ABIM), the Washington State Medical Association, and others. [Download the Choosing Wisely Employer Toolkit.](#)

Community Checkup

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](#)

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For comments about the Update for Purchasers or to change or unsubscribe your email address, please email John Gallagher at jgallagher@wahealthalliance.org.

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. Through innovative strategies and initiatives, we help the entire health care system—from exam room to board room—focus on improving quality and value. We are committed to being the catalyst for change for the health care system in Washington.