



UPDATE for Alliance Participants



LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The Alliance has set as a priority strategic goal reducing overuse of health care services in our state. With unnecessary medical procedures accounting for almost [30 percent of health care spending](#), addressing this issue could help us make huge strides toward a higher value health care system. To advance that goal, we recently unveiled [results from three new reports](#), each focused on potentially avoidable overuse of health care services: a report on geographic variation of procedure rates, a report on potentially avoidable ER visits and a report on hospital readmissions within 30 days. These are the latest in the Alliance's expanding line of reports to provide greater insight into the challenges and successes in our health care system. [Read more from our executive director.](#)

ALLIANCE UPDATES

Three new reports on potential overuse of health care services

In January we unveiled results from three new reports, each focused on potentially avoidable overuse of health care services. [Read the press release.](#)

Right Care, Right Setting: A Report on Potentially Avoidable Emergency Room Visits in Washington State

This report offers a unique look at the problem of potentially avoidable ER visits in Washington state by examining visits both by hospital and by the patient's medical group. The Alliance relied upon diagnoses that providers widely accept as appropriate for treatment in a primary care office. The rate of avoidable ER visits for commercially-insured patients was 8.9 percent and 11.3 percent for Medicaid patients. Eliminating these visits could have saved \$24 million in one year in the Puget Sound region alone. [Read the report.](#)

Hospital Readmissions and Outpatient Care: A Report on Hospital Readmissions and Post-Discharge Care for Commercially Insured Patients in Washington State

This report is a first look at hospital readmissions for the commercially insured in Washington state. While there are other publicly available reports on hospital readmissions, this report shares, for the first time in Washington state, a local view of hospital readmissions within 30 days for all causes among commercially-insured patients and when possible, comparison to national benchmarks. In addition, the report examines whether outpatient visits occurred between hospitalizations. [Read the report.](#)

Different Regions, Different Health Care: Where You Live Matters

This report found that where someone lives often influences the health care services they receive. By looking at health care service delivery patterns for 11 common tests and procedures, the Alliance found significant geographic variation in how often these tests and procedures, which can be expensive and pose potential medical risk, are delivered. [Read the report.](#)

SPOTLIGHT ON IMPROVEMENT

Virginia Mason: Reducing inappropriate antibiotic prescribing in primary care

Inappropriate use and overuse of antibiotics is a serious public health threat and is addressed by several specialty societies' recommendations in the Choosing Wisely campaign. Learn how Virginia Mason reduced their inappropriate antibiotic use by over 50 percent in this month's Spotlight on Improvement. [Read the latest Spotlight on Improvement.](#)

ON THE BLOG

Support for health care transparency bill in Olympia

A bill that would require health insurance companies to submit all patient claims to a statewide database, making health care cost and quality information more transparent, was met with support in Olympia. On January 30, our executive director Nancy Giunto testified to the House Health Care & Wellness Committee in support of House Bill 1437, which modifies legislation passed in the 2014 session to establish an All-Payer Claims Database in Washington state. [Read the blog post.](#)

NEWS TO KNOW

[Too many patients returning to Washington hospitals after treatment, report finds | Puget Sound Business Journal](#)

[Washington Health Alliance Shows Sharp Variability in Use of Medical Procedures | Seattle Business](#)

[Health care transparency bill – opposed last year by Premera – gets second chance | Puget Sound Business Journal](#)

NEW MEMBERS

We are excited to welcome two new members to the Alliance.

- [Astellas Pharma US](#), focuses on five key therapeutic areas: cardiology, dermatology, immunology, infectious disease and urology.
- [Pharmacy Quality Alliance](#) is a consensus-based, multistakeholder membership organization committed to improving health care quality and patient safety with a focus on the appropriate use of medications.

We're grateful to our new members for recognizing the importance of the Alliance's work and for helping us to move the needle toward a more transparent and high-quality health system.

UPCOMING ALLIANCE MEETINGS

Alliance members are welcome to attend any Alliance board, committee or work group meeting, except board retreats. RSVP to tojloyd@wahealthalliance.org.

Board of Directors

February 24, 2:30–4:30 p.m., [Alliance Office](#), 2nd floor community conference room

Health Economics Committee

February 12, 8:30–10:30 a.m., [Alliance Office](#)

Quality Improvement Committee

February 12, 2:00–4:00 p.m., [Alliance Office](#)

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. [Learn more.](#)

Visit the Community Checkup website

The Community Checkup website helps consumers make informed choices by giving them access to a robust and accessible supply of data and resources. The website is regularly updated with new information and data; for example, new results for hospital measures from the Leapfrog Group and Hospital Compare. [Learn more.](#)

Follow the Alliance on Twitter

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

Follow the Alliance on LinkedIn

We invite you to follow the Alliance on our [LinkedIn company page](#).

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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