



King County

Health Reform Initiative

Table Top Scenario

Puget Sound Health Alliance – Bill has low back pain

Background

Ineffective care is driving up the cost of health care. A RAND study estimates that in the Puget Sound area, 41 cents of every health care dollar goes toward health care that doesn't improve your health. Following evidence-based guidelines for care – that is, care that medical evidence shows actually works so you get the right care at the right time -- can significantly improve your health and, over time, drastically reduce the cost of health care. Earlier this year, the Puget Sound Health Alliance, which was founded by King County Executive Ron Sims, issued its first Community Checkup Report which shows what percentage of the time patients receive care that follows evidence-based guidelines. King County was a major funder of this groundbreaking effort which has received national recognition and paved the way for future reports that will include more data from more clinics and hospitals and will drill down even further.

This information is available to the public via the web.

Scenario

Bill is a bus driver who has been recently diagnosed with low back pain. He has talked to fellow bus drivers about his back pain and knows many of them have had MRIs. Bill goes to see his doctor at Group Health and after taking his medical history and performing an exam, Bill's doctor says an MRI is not necessary and recommends physical therapy. Bill wants more information on the recommended treatment for someone with low back pain and which clinics in the area have patients whose care follows those guidelines most of the time.

Challenge

1. How can Bill use the Puget Sound Health Alliance Community Checkup Report to make sure he is getting the right care at the right time?
2. How can Bill find information on the percentage of time his clinic follows the evidence-based guidelines for low back pain?

Tools

The Puget Sound Health Alliance offers the Community Checkup Report on the web. There, information can be found describing the evidence-based guidelines for certain conditions and shows the percentage of the time patients at area clinics receive care that fits within the

guidelines. By mid-summer, the report will be available in an easier-to-use searchable format too.

1. Go to: www.wacommunitycheckup.org
2. Click on Low Back Pain on the left hand menu
3. Scroll through the narrative on evidence based guidelines to evaluate care options.
4. Scroll to the clinic ratings to find Group Health.

Outcome

Identify which of the County's Health Reform Initiative goals is accomplished by how you solved the scenario:

1. Manage risk upstream – prevention of chronic disease by encouraging employees to eat smart, move more, stress less and quit tobacco.
2. Choose well -- help employees be smarter health care consumers. Educate them about how their choices impact health care costs and outcomes.
3. Empower employees to be partners in managing their own health care – give employees the tools they need to pro-actively manage their own health and ensure they are getting the best treatment possible.
4. Get employees to understand what they pay is not the cost of health care, but only their share.