

REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY • FALL 2009

reach



GROUP HEALTH's impact begins by combining knowledge and advocacy on behalf of our patients and customers. Then we reach out to answer unmet needs, and reach beyond, sharing our innovations in communities near and far. Because when more people stay well, when they have a voice and access to the right care at the right time, we all benefit.

reach out

WE SUPPORT VULNERABLE PEOPLE WITH OUR CARE AND OUR VOICE

Through a combination of sponsored care, government programs, and advocacy, Group Health reaches out to care for people in need.



After a heart attack and surgeries forced her to stop working, single mom Edith Jimenez (seated, with her son and social worker) could not afford her coverage or medications. The Sponsored Care program helped her through her medical and financial crisis.

The fragile fabric and mismatched seams of the nation's health care safety net are unraveling. Group Health works in many ways to design stronger alternatives:

SPONSORED CARE. This program serves as a bridge to long-term assistance such as Medicaid or Medicare disability. In 2008 we provided \$2,381,589 in temporary financial help for members and donated care for patients.

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS. Medicaid recipients and low-income families often have fractured access to the kind of care that will help them get well and stay

well. Group Health works with many of these families, providing preventive care and access to specialists. We make up the difference between our costs and government funding, a total of \$23,825,000 in 2008.

CHILDREN'S ACCESS FUND. In 2006 we invested \$2 million in outreach to eligible families and access to coverage and care for uninsured children. By 2008, matching funds and statewide partners in public health agencies and community clinics helped grow the fund to \$6 million. After the first year, this effort had connected 33,000 more children statewide with health coverage, and enrollment is still climbing.

Committed to improving health care for all, we reach out to foster productive dialogue on health reform and demonstrate what works.

Policy-makers envision an efficient, transparent system that delivers better care. That's why Group Health is in demand, from lawmakers touring through our facilities, to our leaders testifying in Olympia and in Washington, DC.

Over the last 60 years, we have worked to fine-tune our integrated system of care and coverage, using the latest technology to improve quality and reduce costs. We're intent on sharing our success, so our members and all Americans can experience better health results.

And we've learned that serving many can start by serving one. Spokane resident Fred Whatley was awaiting an organ transplant when his employer switched to Group Health. Fred then faced a standard six-month waiting period for previously existing conditions—it was the state law. He appealed, and Group Health agreed: it just wasn't right. So we changed our coverage, then worked to change the law. Now, nobody enrolled in a small group plan in Washington state has to wait longer for a transplant when changing insurance.



Group Health is uniquely organized to test, learn, and share what works in the real world of health care. It's a powerful cycle that constantly repeats and renews.

Group Health provides a place where higher education and medical training meet to serve community needs.

Half of the children in Washington are born eligible for Medicaid, and about five percent of babies in our state are born to moms aged 15 to 19. Patients from all walks of life need family medicine and prenatal care, and we bring these resources into Seattle's urban core through our partnerships in medical education and community health centers.

This includes a special clinic for expectant teen mothers, and delivery for moms of all ages at our Family Beginnings Birthing Center. Our Family Medicine Residency Program doctors and visiting medical students from University of Washington Medical School train here, increasing patient access to care while gaining hands-on insight into Group Health's



Amber Ransom confirms her baby's due date with family medicine resident Sarah Landrum, MD, in the Teen Pregnancy and Parenting Clinic at our Capitol Hill Medical Campus in Seattle.

approach to preventive care, obstetrics, adolescent medicine, and community-based medicine.

Staff in our clinic and hospital-based programs take time to mentor and teach within Group Health. Many of our clinicians also hold medical teaching positions in our local colleges and universities. Add to this our training and residency programs for nursing, pharmacy, and behavioral health, and you get a knowledge-building environment that also helps to support health in communities of need.

Volunteers and donors extend the reach of our programs for people in all of life's stages.

The Group Health Foundation acts as a steward to 100 different donor-designated gift funds that help pay for programs across our care system. In 2008, \$750,000 of such donations supported Group Health departments.

Hospice is a donor-supported program where benefits resonate beyond members' end-of-life medical care. About 700 donors gave \$75,000 to our Hospice Program last year, funding grief counseling for family members, and education programs for Hospice volunteers and medical staff.

Janice Dawson (left) is a 27-year Group Health employee who now works as a Hospice volunteer. Janice supported siblings Boyd Schorr and Paula Decker when their mother entered hospice care in 2008.



reach beyond

WE INVESTIGATE WHAT WORKS, THEN SHARE IT SO OTHERS CAN BENEFIT

Our history of innovation endures with ideas that reach beyond routine care.

deliver better care at lower cost. This 5-year, \$1.5 million initiative boosts the reach of our pioneering spirit and our donors' generosity.

In one example, a pharmacy team wanted to help Group Health patients with chronic diseases manage complex combinations of medications. Their innovation: packaging medicines by the dose—sealed in bubble packs that are labeled with the precise time and date each dose should be taken. For additional support, medical teams leave secure voice mail messages to help patients follow their plan, remember upcoming refills, and learn about dosing changes.

In 2008, our donor-supported Partnership for Innovation gave more than \$700,000 for 6 patient-care initiatives with the potential to

At Group Health, people speak up if things could be easier, safer, or more effective for members. How does an idea come to life? Donor dollars help us lift suggestions from the front lines of care and test their viability in our medical centers.



Focused on sustained health, we reach beyond the exam room, funding programs to keep people active and healthier.

Research shows exercise supports heart health and long-term mental function. Regular physical activity even lowered overall health care costs among 5,000 of our Medicare-aged SilverSneakers participants at area health clubs.

And exercise can be fun, especially when you've got company. That's why over the past 2 years we gave \$17,500 in JumpStart grants to help our staff with team fundraising for nonprofit fitness events like runs, walks, stair climbs, and cycling races.

Since 2004 we've supported hundreds of community cycling events across the region with corporate sponsorships. And to practice what we preach, more than 300 staff and Group Health members participated in cycling rides and 60 medical staff donated their time for first aid support in 2008-2009.

We also helped over 150 Group Health employees avoid 15,000 miles in their cars with our 2009 commute challenge. It all adds up: healthier people, cleaner air, and a whole lot of burned calories instead of burned carbons.



They'll never forget their first Group Health STP ride

We donated \$10,000 to the Cascade Bicycle Club's Major Taylor Project, which gives bikes to 11- to 18-year-olds, and guides them in cycling after school to establish a healthy activity for a lifetime. Cycling pros donate their time to train teams for major events, like the two teams who rode in this year's Seattle-to-Portland Bicycle Classic. Marshall "Major" Taylor, the program's namesake, was the first African-American professional cyclist, and a one-mile track cycling national champion in 1899.



Group Health researcher Lisa Jackson, MD, MPH, leads our Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit (VTEU); Group Health is one of eight organizations in the national VTEU network. Our researchers—along with a network of medical research institutions across the U.S.—are testing the safety and effectiveness of H1N1 (swine) flu vaccines, helping the nation prepare for a potentially serious outbreak.

From boosting immunization rates locally to conducting vaccine studies with global impact, we reach beyond our doors to stop preventable disease.

Vaccines protect us against diseases that have no treatment and no cure. For children, especially during their first years, vaccination is even more critical because their young immune systems can't fight many diseases. Because immunization aligns with our core value of disease prevention, every area of Group Health is committed to an aspect of vaccine safety, effectiveness, awareness, or access.

The Group Health Foundation recently committed \$1 million to educate parents and inoculate more kids in our state over the next three years, partnering with the state's Department of Health, Seattle Children's, school districts, local health agencies, and others to increase access.

Group Health has been tapped to research the power of shared decision-making by patients and physicians.

When patients have conditions where there's little evidence that one treatment works better than another, our doctors don't just make the call. Instead, they can use shared decision-making: providing information and tools that help patients weigh their options and choose what fits their life.

Washington was the first state to pass shared decision-making legislation, and Group Health is helping to evaluate its impact. Earlier studies show that given a choice of equally effective approaches, many people choose the least invasive treatment, which may be less costly, too. The Group Health Research Institute secured a two-year, \$400,000 Commonwealth Fund grant to study patient satisfaction with the tools, and to measure the impact on cost and utilization.

Shared decision-making for conditions such as osteoarthritis of the knee helps thousands of patients undergo less invasive, less expensive treatments and quickly and directly improve their quality of life.



A SHARED PURPOSE

Group Health was founded in 1947 by a group of determined citizens and physicians who came together to make health care more affordable. The bylaws they wrote continue to guide us today: "To reduce cost as a barrier to health care... To promote other projects in the interest of public health... To serve the greatest number."

Inspired by cooperative principles, they founded a consumer-governed, nonprofit health care system offering care and coverage together. Their vision—radical at the time—is why we are a mission-focused organization, rather than profit-driven. It's also why we search for every possible opportunity to extend our reach, our resources, and our knowledge for the greater good.

The people of Group Health today—our member Board of Trustees, clinicians, office staff, researchers, management, Foundation donors—all share the purpose that motivated our predecessors 62 years ago. We are constantly searching for innovative new ways to promote healthier lives for our patients, our friends and neighbors, and the communities we serve.

That's why many of the ideas captured here—as well as many more we didn't have room to highlight—are their ideas. And that's why we dedicate this piece to the remarkable people of Group Health who devote their energy and passion to create better health. They truly help us to reach beyond.

Scott Armstrong
President and CEO
Group Health Cooperative

Extending our reach

Every year we add new names to our circle of Foundation donors, including community members, patients, and staff. Their gifts validate that ours is the right work; they boost our ability to impact people for the better.

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About Group Health

Group Health Cooperative is a consumer-governed, nonprofit health care system that integrates care and coverage. Along with its subsidiaries, Group Health Options, Inc. and KPS Health Plans, Group Health serves more than 600,000 residents in Washington state and North Idaho.

OUR HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Providing care in 32 Group Health locations and in 48 partner hospitals, our medical group is comprised of more than 900 primary care physicians and specialists. For a number of our health plan offerings, thousands of additional doctors and medical service providers are available through a choice of partner networks and contracted physician offices.

OUR HEALTH COVERAGE PLANS

Group Health Options, Inc. offers individual and group plans, including

defined network, point-of-service, and preferred provider organization choices. Group Health Cooperative offers individual and group plans, Medicare plans, and participates in Washington state's Basic Health, Healthy Options, and Children's Health Insurance plans.

GROUP HEALTH RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Formerly known as the Center for Health Studies, this non-proprietary, public interest research institute operates within Group Health, funded primarily through government and private grants. The Group Health Research Institute is nationally renowned for its clinical investigations on the prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of major health problems.

As America's struggle to provide high-quality, affordable health care intensifies, so has Group Health's commitment to discovery and innovation. By studying a population that gets care and coverage through our integrated system, our research scientists are well positioned to find new ways to contain costs and improve health outcomes.

GROUP HEALTH FOUNDATION

This foundation supports Group Health in providing the best care for its members, and puts donated funds to work improving health outcomes across the region, with a focus on children and teens.

More than 6,000 donors made gifts to the Foundation in 2008. Donors may designate their gifts to the Critical and Emergent Needs Fund, to our general endowment, or to gift funds that serve specific programs or departments. Some donors create endowed funds that will generate income for a program in perpetuity. The Group Health Foundation, like Group Health Cooperative, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Every day, Group Health is extending our reach in new ways. Learn more and stay in touch at ghc.org.

Group Health
320 Westlake Ave.N.,
Suite 100
Seattle, WA 98109-5233



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