

# creating & supporting healthy lives

**Group Health's founders** created a unique organization focused on improving health—while providing access to safe, effective, affordable care when it's needed. ■ Since our founding nearly 65 years ago, Group Health has acted on the belief that the greatest opportunity to impact health—with our members, colleagues, friends, neighbors, and throughout our communities—comes from advancing and sharing knowledge, and supporting and promoting programs that encourage the lifelong pursuit of better health. We are committed to delivering better health and health care for our patients and for the entire community.



Nurse-midwife Ann Darlington visits with her patient Luisa Santos and newborn Aaliya Jones. Our partnership with community clinics, including Neighborcare Health, allowed Santos to deliver Aaliya at the Group Health Family Beginnings Birthing Center, assuring her of a high-quality birth experience.

## Providing care and a helping hand

At Group Health, we deliver care to low-income adults and children through our participation in Washington State's managed and fee-for-service Medicaid programs and Basic Health Plan and Basic Health Plus.

Through our participation in Project Access programs throughout Washington state, uninsured patients receive access to specialty care such as orthopedics, dermatology, gynecology, physical therapy, and others.

A partnership with Country Doctor Community Health Centers, International Community Health Services, and Neighborcare Health enables low-income expectant mothers to deliver

their babies at the Group Health Family Beginnings Birthing Center, one of the few hospital facilities in the Seattle area that welcomes certified nurse-midwives to deliver babies on-site. Teen mothers and new parents get support and assistance at Family Beginnings, and also at the Group Health Teen Pregnancy and Parenting Clinic, where our goal is to help pregnant teens deliver healthy babies and to give them the skills and support needed to raise a healthy child. Children through age 2 receive well-child care at the teen center.

Financial problems, on top of unexpected and frightening medical conditions, can beset just about anyone. Our two Sponsored Care programs—Health Care Assistance and Charity Care—provide temporary financial assistance for health care by waiving copayments, fees, medical bills, and sometimes monthly premiums for services provided at any of our 25 medical centers. Together, these programs come to the aid of members who need financial assistance, and to qualifying low-income nonmember patients.

## Sharing what we know

Continuous learning and improvement are lofty goals, but they are realized every day at Group Health. That's no coincidence. By always asking "what's next," we are working to fulfill a founding tenet of Group Health: to transform health and health care in order to serve the greatest number.

### Training and educating the next generation

Our commitment to learning and improvement is expressed through Group Health's Family Medicine Residency Program. Each year, a half dozen new residents are accepted into this rigorous three-year program, which is one of the few physician residencies in the country built around outpatient care, rather than hospital care.

Physician specialists, medical assistants, nurses, pharmacists, and opticians are among the many health professionals who benefit from other training and residency programs provided by or supported by Group Health.

### Finding answers through research

Scientists at the Group Health Research Institute (GHRI) power some of this work, publishing more than 250 peer-reviewed studies a year that focus on how to better deliver high quality, cost-effective health care; effectively prevent, manage, and treat illness; and design and evaluate systems that result in better health outcomes. The value of their findings multiplies quickly when shared beyond the walls of Group Health.

One example of shared knowledge is the patient-centered medical home. GHRI scientists tested the effectiveness of this model of care through a pilot at a Group



University of Washington family medicine resident Margaret Onwuka, MD (left), consults with Group Health obstetrician Errett Story, MD (right), and Chris Doerr, RN at our Family Beginnings Birthing Center. Our medical staff devote thousands of hours each year to training the next generation of health care professionals including physicians—some of whom are part of the Group Health Family Medicine Residency Program—medical assistants, nurses, pharmacists, and opticians.

Health Medical Centers clinic, and found that it delivered significant improvements in patient health, career satisfaction for doctors, and per-patient expense. Second-year results of this medical home pilot were published in the health policy journal, *Health Affairs*, drawing interest from health care leaders, providers, and policymakers from around the country and the world. Medical home is now in place at all Group Health clinics.

### Improving on the job

Several years ago, Group Health adopted a management philosophy that focuses on continuous improvement and creating standard work. By fully involving frontline staff who do the work, Group Health has found many ways to make improvements that have significant benefits

## A LEARNING SYSTEM IN ACTION

Fatal overdoses involving prescribed opioids increased dramatically in the United States between 1999 and 2006. That led to a research project by Group Health Research Institute senior investigator Michael Von Korff, ScD. In 2010 he published a study that linked the prescribing of opioids for noncancer pain with a higher risk of fatal and nonfatal overdoses. His research showed that over time Group Health, like other systems nationwide,

had a significant increase in the rate of prescribing opioids for chronic noncancer pain.

As a result of his findings, Group Health took action, launching a primary care-based initiative late in 2010 to enhance opioid prescribing safety while improving care for patients with chronic pain, including developing standardized care plans for those patients.

Grants from several organizations, including the Group Health Foundation,

funded the creation of an online clinical education course to explain the new guidelines to clinicians. Just nine months after the guideline was implemented, care plans were developed for 85 percent of patients receiving long-term opioid therapy for chronic noncancer pain.

Institute scientists are evaluating the initiative's effects on care, hoping the Group Health experience can guide national efforts.

to patients. Our success has yielded queries from local, national, and international organizations that have visited Group Health to watch and learn.

Our physicians and leaders are frequently tapped to share innovations in areas such as shared decision making, and improvements in the use of high-end imaging—two topics that were included in last spring’s Solutions for Transforming Care conference. Sponsored by Group Health, the conference drew health care providers, policy makers, and leaders from across the Puget Sound region and Washington state.

## Giving to community programs

Most decisions about health take place outside of the doctor’s office. The choices we make every day around such things as what we eat, how much rest we get, whether we exercise, and how we manage stress all affect our health. That’s why programs that encourage healthy choices can make a big difference in the overall health of a community.

At Group Health, we’re helping kids learn about healthy choices through scholarships to Seattle Sounders soccer sports camps, and through our support of the Cascade

Bicycle Club’s Group Health Basics of Bicycling program as well as the Major Taylor Project. This program helps at-risk, low-income youths learn to integrate bike riding into their life, and they learn about the lifelong health benefits of exercise.

Health Trek, a curriculum developed by Group Health, teaches kids how to eat well, stay healthy, stay safe, and much more. Health Trek is the only curriculum certified by the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for physical health and nutrition in Washington state middle schools.

We’ve also given funding support to the development of the new Professor Wellbody exhibit at the Pacific Science Center. Scheduled to open in 2012, this exhibit is designed to help people of all ages make good decisions about their health, and the health of their community.



Group Health community outreach includes scholarships to Seattle Sounders soccer camps.

### COMMUNITY BENEFIT FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

Category	Description	Contribution
Care and coverage for low-income populations	Medicaid and Basic Health coverage, financial assistance, and sponsored care	\$40,046,851
Community health services	Project Access, women’s and children’s services	\$2,363,443
Education for health professionals	Training for physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professionals	\$8,246,496
Research	Group Health Research Institute	\$44,606,841
Community building and health initiatives	In-kind and cash donations, soccer camp scholarships, bike events for kids, wellness exhibits and programs	\$558,915

**WHO WE ARE** Group Health is one of the nation’s leading nonprofit health systems, recognized for its consumer-governed cooperative origins and innovative solutions for improving care. Established in 1947, Group Health Cooperative—together with its subsidiaries Group Health Options, Inc. and KPS Health Plans—provides health coverage to more than 670,000 residents of Washington state and North Idaho. More than 400,000 members receive care from Group Health Physicians medical group at Group Health Medical Centers locations across the Puget Sound region and Spokane. Group Health advances health in the community through its medical education, charitable foundation, and nationally recognized research institute.

