

New Web Site Compares Hospital Quality

For the first time ever, PEBB members can compare the quality of care provided by most Oregon hospitals. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the Hospital Quality Alliance launched a new Web site, www.hospitalcompare.hhs.gov, this spring. The site allows consumers to see how more than 4,000 hospitals nationwide perform on a set of standard measures of care for heart attack, heart failure and pneumonia.

These are some of the most common and costly conditions that hospitals treat. Research shows

that standard treatments provide the best results for most adults with these conditions and are an important part of patients' overall care.

As an example, PEBB members might use the site to check how often heart attack patients receive aspirin when they first arrive at hospitals in their region. This is an important quality-of-care measure because chewing an aspirin as soon as symptoms of a heart attack begin may help reduce the severity of the attack and prevent another one.

Hospitals voluntarily report how often they follow the

recommended guidelines. The site shows where they fall compared with 100 percent compliance. It also shows how hospitals compare with national and statewide performance averages.

PEBB members may see that some Oregon hospitals – especially smaller hospitals in rural areas – don't show their quality data. This may be because they don't participate in the Hospital Quality Alliance or because they don't treat many patients with the tracked conditions.

CMS and the Alliance are developing a survey to measure how patients view the quality of care they receive in hospitals. Survey results will be added to Hospital Compare in the future.

Board Works toward Decisions in June

The Benefit Board plans to select 2006 medical service providers in June.

In the request for proposals it issued earlier this year, the Board asked potential vendors to show steps they would take next year to advance the PEBB Vision for 2007.

The Board's Proposal Review Committee provided initial scoring on qualified medical services proposals in April. The scores were

then used to determine which proposals would move to the next round of evaluation. The committee has interviewed those proposers and has entered into further negotiations to determine which will eventually be selected.

The Board will consider committee recommendations at its June 21 public meeting. The PEBB Web site will report results before the end of the month.

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The Peril of Walking Upright It's a Pain in the Back

If you've ever suffered from low back pain, you're not alone. About 85 percent of all adults will have low back pain at some time in their lives. It's the second-most-common complaint patients bring to healthcare providers (colds are number one).

Luckily, about 90 percent of those sufferers will get relief without too much medical care. Most acute low back pain responds well to over-the-counter pain relievers, cold and/or heat treatments, a day or two of rest and a gradual return to activity.

PEBB members with low back pain have access to information and education resources to help them deal with this common condition.

Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon sponsors the Back to

Health program. The company tracks claims for back-pain-related treatment and mails support materials to members who appear to be having back trouble. The program also includes a patient survey and, for some, a video.

Kaiser Permanente members with chronic pain can join a Chronic Pain Support Group. Group members support each other by sharing what works for them and what doesn't. Kaiser Permanente doctors can also refer patients to the Multidisciplinary Pain Management Clinic, where patients try a range of ways to reduce pain and improve function.

Keep Back Pain at Bay

Learn to lift with proper posture to maintain your back health.

- Stretch first if you're going to do a lot of lifting.
- Get close to the load – as if you're hugging the object.
- Keep your torso upright while you squat to pick the object up.
- Tighten your stomach muscles, but don't hold your breath.
- Lift with your legs, which have the strongest muscles in your body.

When you've lifted the load, turn with your feet; don't twist with your back.

If a load is too heavy to lift alone, ask for help. If it's above your shoulders, use a step stool to position yourself so the load is at least at chest level; waist high is even better.

PEBB Resources

Access PEBB, insurance companies and other benefit resources using the contact information below. The insurance company Web sites include provider directories. You can also link to insurance company Web sites from the PEBB Web site.

PEBB

Phone: (503) 373-1102, (800) 788-0520
Fax: (503) 373-1654
Web: oregon.gov/DAS/PEBB
E-mail: inquiries.pebb@state.or.us

PEBB Health Center

Phone: (503) 362-1111, (800) 701-1333
Web: www.pebbhealth.org

BenefitHelp Solutions

(Healthcare and Dependent Care FSAs)
Phone: (800) 556-2230
Web site: www.benefithelpsolutions.com

Kaiser Permanente

(HMO & Dental Plans)
Phone: (503) 813-2000, (800) 813-2000
Web site: my.kp.org/nw/pebb

The ODS Companies

(Dental Plans)
Phone: (800) 452-1058
Web site: www.odscompanies.com/pebb

Regence BlueCross BlueShield of Oregon

(PPO Plans)
Phone: (800) 826-9813 (outside Portland);
(503) 220-3849 (Portland)
Web site: www.or.regence.com/pebb

The Standard Insurance Company

(Life and Disability Plans)
Phone: (800) 842-1707;
Disability (800) 242-1888
Web site: www.standard.com

UnumProvident

(Long Term Care Plan)
Phone: (800) 227-4165
Web site: www.unumprovident.com/enroll/pebb

VSP

(Vision Service Plan)
Phone: (800) 877-7195
Web site: www.vsp.com

Willamette Dental Insurance

(Dental Plan)
Phone: (800) 460-7644
Web site: www.willametedental.com

Arthritis

Meeting a Common Challenge

Arthritis is the leading cause of disability in the U.S. More than 25 percent of adult Oregonians report having been diagnosed with arthritis. If the PEBB population is typical, that means about 10,000 PEBB members also have arthritis.

While research has identified more than 100 forms of the disease, osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common. The exact cause of OA is not known, and many factors may play a role in whether or not you get OA. They include age, overweight or obesity, joint injury or overuse, and genetics.

The good news is that people who are diagnosed with OA can manage the disease and maintain the quality of their lives. To manage OA, patients and their healthcare providers develop a self-care plan that addresses:

- ✓ Regular exercise
- ✓ Diet and weight loss
- ✓ Medications.

Exercise

Regular exercise may help you avoid OA as well as deal with it after a diagnosis. Being in motion helps you keep your joints flexible, build strength and endurance, reduce pain and feel better emotionally.

Diet and weight loss

Every extra pound you gain adds three pounds of pressure on your

knees and six times the pressure on your hips. Knees, hips and vertebrae in the lower back are the joints most likely to be painfully affected by OA. Reaching and keeping a normal weight can help reduce pain and improve mobility.



Medications

If you're diagnosed with OA, you and your provider should determine medications you can take to reduce joint inflammation and pain. You may start with acetaminophen (Tylenol). Or, your provider might suggest a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID) such as naproxen (Aleve) or a generic prescription NSAID.

Two drugs that were commonly prescribed for arthritis patients – Vioxx and Bextra – have been taken off the market because of concerns over heart health.

Resources

When you enter your zip code on The National Arthritis Foundation Web site (www.arthritis.org) it will find nearby aquatic and other exercise programs for those with arthritis.

Oregon's Department of Human Services Web site offers a list of links to arthritis research, advocacy and support organizations at oregon.gov/DHS/ph/arthritis/links.shtml.

Register to use the State of Health online at www.wellmed.com/stateofhealth and visit the Arthritis Condition Center. You'll find up-to-date news and information along with advice on managing the condition.

Public Meetings

The Benefit Board and its subcommittees usually meet monthly. Times and locations are subject to change. For schedules, please check the Meetings section of the PEBB Web site: oregon.gov/DAS/PEBB/meetings.shtml.

(Please follow agency policy on use of the Internet at work.)

The Evidence Says, "You Can Quit"

Science supports PEBB member efforts to quit smoking through the Benefit Board's tobacco cessation pilot program. PEBB offers this benefit through Free & Clear, an award-winning program based on 20 years of research and clinical experience. With its evidence-based

services and support, Free & Clear has helped thousands of people take control of their lives and their health by quitting tobacco.

You can join them through a program designed to meet your personal needs. You can even choose how you want to enroll:

By phone English (800) 292-2336
Spanish: (877) 266-3863
TTY: (877) 777-6534

Online <http://www.freeclear.com/PEBB/>



If you enroll by phone be sure to say you're a PEBB member so you'll receive the full benefit

BCA Becomes BenefitHelp Solutions

PEBB's third-party administrator – formerly known as BestChoice Administrators (BCA) – is now doing business as BenefitHelp Solutions (BHS). The company administers healthcare and dependent care flexible spending accounts (FSAs) for PEBB members. The phone numbers and addresses members use to contact the company will remain the same. But the Web site has a new address: www.benefithelpsolutions.com.

BHS contacts for Healthcare and Dependent Care FSAs

- Customer Service (800) 556-2230
- Fax (503) 765-3554
- Mailing Address: PO Box 67240, Portland, OR 97268-1240
- E-mail: bca_pebb@benefithelpsolutions.com

Programs at the PEBB Health Center

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Depression

Presenter: EAP
Date: Thurs., July 14,
noon-1 p.m.

Learn how to get help for yourself or others who suffer from this highly treatable medical condition.

Smoking Cessation

Presenter: Carolyn Buel, ANP
Date: Tues., July 19, noon-1 p.m.
and 5:15-6:15 p.m.

Evaluate your readiness to quit, and learn about PEBB's smoking cessation benefit.

Protect Your Eyesight

Presenter: Daniel Bishop, M.D.
Date: Thurs., July 21,
noon-1 p.m.

Learn about eye problems and diseases, and why routine eye exams are important.

What's in Your Food?

Presenter: Linda Spaulding, Certified Nutrition Consultant and Educator
Date: Tues., July 26,
noon-1 p.m.

Learn how to avoid unhealthy additives and make safe, healthy food choices.



The Health Center's lending library has materials related to these topics and more. Call or e-mail for your library card to take advantage of the resources available to all PEBB members statewide.

Electronic Medical Records

The Next Frontier in Healthcare

Did You Know?

Did you know that electronic medical records can lead to fewer medical errors, improved disease management and better-organized healthcare? An electronic medical record (also known as an EMR, online health record or electronic health record) would be available to your doctor on a computer in the office and would let your provider maintain patient medical information electronically. While the majority of providers are not yet using EMRs, in the next few years, more doctors, hospitals and other healthcare organizations will adopt this technology because it offers significant benefits to patient care and provider efficiency.

How it is and how it can be...

It's likely that each time you visit your doctor, you glimpse a manila folder bulging with notes, lab test results, referral slips and other documents tracing your medical history. If you've been seeing the same provider for many years, the paper file might be six inches thick and date back a decade. Hopefully, most of the notes are legible and well organized.

Fast forward to a medical practice that uses electronic medical records. Your primary care provider maintains all of your information in a computer file and

can look at your medical history easily, without paging through hundreds of documents. He can remind you of past health complaints and drug allergies. The EMR system he uses also automatically gives him information about your diagnosis and strategies for managing your health.

Why electronic medical records?

The benefits of electronic medical records are numerous:

- A more accurate and complete medical record. Your provider can easily read your EMR and can search it for past diagnoses, allergies and lab results.
- Improved doctor-and-patient communication and better patient care. Your provider can enter data in the computer during a visit and provide you with relevant information about your medical history. Many EMRs offer disease management information and healthcare decision support. The EMR can automatically provide your doctor information about your diagnoses and possibilities for treatment.
- Fewer medical and prescription errors. EMRs can reduce errors caused by illegible handwriting, missing documents or incomplete

“Using electronic medical records has improved the way we practice medicine. Records are more complete, better organized, and much more accessible. They allow us to limit redundancy and mistakes and provide care in a timely and evidence-based way. I’m convinced that patient care is better as a result.”

— Somnath Saha, M.D., MPH

information. For example, with EMRs, doctors can enter prescriptions in electronic form and receive alerts on drug interactions and allergies.

- Better communication between providers. Some systems allow providers to communicate with the computers of pharmacies, other doctors and hospitals to improve the care you receive. This means information could be communicated more accurately and completely.

What can you do to encourage wider use of EMRs?

Providers are more likely to adopt new technology if many patients request they do so. Next time you visit your doctor, ask her if her practice is considering adopting electronic medical records. Mention the advantages you've heard about and suggest she analyze the benefits.

PEBB Health Center Update

775 Court St. NE • Salem, OR 97301

(800) 701-1333 • www.pebbhealth.org • (503) 362-1111 • pebbhealth@oregonwellness.com

Outside the Salem area? Call the Health Center to arrange a class or health screening at your worksite.

Programs at the PEBB Health Center

Registration required. Handouts may be available if you are unable to attend. Check the Health Center Web site at www.pebbhealth.org for updates. *(Please follow agency rules on use of the Internet at work.)* Feel free to bring a meal to any of these classes.

Contain Your Garden for Healthy Eating

Presenter: Cindy Clifford, Master Gardener
Date: Thurs., June 2, noon-1 p.m.

Nurture yourself and improve health with fresh-grown vegetables and flowers from a container garden.

Nutrition, Lifestyle & Health

Presenter: Linda Spaulding, Certified Nutrition Consultant and Educator
Date: Thurs., June 2, 5:15-6:15 p.m.

Be active to improve your mental and physical health.

Smoking Cessation

Presenter: Carolyn Buel, ANP
Date: Tues., June 7, noon-1 p.m.

Evaluate your readiness to quit, and learn about nicotine replacement therapy in PEBB's free tobacco cessation pilot program.

Am I Having a Heart Attack?

Presenter: Jeanine Olson, ANP
Date: Thurs., June 16, noon-1 p.m.

Learn how women's and men's symptoms differ and how to decrease your risks.

Oh My Aching Back

Presenter: Jennifer Truax, PT, Certified Athletic Trainer
Date: Wed., June 22, 5:15-6:15 p.m.

Work doesn't have to be a pain in the back. Learn to undo the toll.

Stress Management

Presenter: Linda Spaulding, Certified Nutrition Consultant and Educator
Date: Thurs., July 7, 5:15-6:15 p.m.
Fee: \$15.00 for optional guide book

Learn about the effects of stress and eight proven techniques that can help to reduce stress.

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Men's Health Week June 27-July 1

Men, call now to schedule a free health screening and consultation with a Nurse Practitioner.

Get SASsy with the Summer Adventure Series!

Stepping Up (Walking & Running)

Presenter: John Gallagher
Date: Tues., June 28, 12-1 p.m.
If you're already a walker, maybe running is the next step. This expert can help you get started.

White Water and Sea Kayaking

Presenter: Kay Mattson, ACA Certified White Water Instructor, and Sam Drevo, ACA Instructor and Trainer
Date: Thurs., June 30, 5:15-6:45 p.m.

Learn with it takes to get started in these water sports. Inspirational video, slides and resources.

Hiking and Backpacking to Improve Your Health

Presenter: Lee Slattum, Chemeketa Hiking Club
Date: Tues. July 12, noon-1 p.m.
Learn the right gear, the right places and the endless possibilities to enjoy Oregon's natural beauty.

Know your Numbers

Presenter: Carolyn Buel, ANP, and Liz Marik, FNP
Time: noon-1 p.m.

Wed., June 15: What do all your health screening numbers mean?

Tues., June 21: Now that you know your numbers, what can you do about them?

PEBB Mission

To provide a high quality plan of health and other benefits that are affordable to both the employee and the state.