

# Reinventing health care

*Group Health and Providence form a Spokane company based on a new model for treating patients*

By PETER NEURATH  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Group Health Cooperative and Providence Health Care are teaming up in Spokane in an unusual way to provide better health care. This makes them part of the trend of medical groups and hospital organizations linking together in various ways to improve health care quality and to contain rising costs.

Group Health, a Seattle-based provider of insurance together with medical care, and Providence Health Care in Spokane together have formed a limited liability corporation that will bring together Group Health doctors and the Spokane-area doctors of Providence Health Care, a unit of Providence Health & Services, the region's largest hospital organization with 27 hospitals across five states. Two Providence hospitals in Spokane will serve patients referred by doctors in this new corporation.



Wilson

Mike Wilson, CEO of Providence Health Care in Eastern Washington, said the new corporation will serve as a means to connect the leadership of the two organizations "for planning and implementing the care model we envision." This will include the "medical home" model of health care that Group Health has successfully tried and fully adopted.

In time the new corporation, which as yet has no name, will invite other physician groups to join. "We will be adding more provider groups to create a closely integrated delivery system," said Kelly Stanford, vice president of market development with Group Health in Spokane. "Participants will work cohesively to coordinate care, agree to be paid differently (than by fee for service) and be held accountable of health outcomes."

The Group Health and Providence

## HEALTH CARE PRIMER

*The health care sector is in the midst of a major restructuring, but the innovations and changes are often obscured by terminology. The Puget Sound Business Journal asked Dr. Michael Soman of Group Health to demystify some common terms.*

**MEDICAL HOME:** Putting patients in the pilot's seat, with the doctor as the co-pilot. The patient's care is managed and coordinated by personal physicians and their teams.

**COORDINATED CARE:** Making sure all of the caregivers are talking to each other. All aspects of patient care are handled in a rational way that fits together to assure no balls are dropped, and all providers are always aware of the whole picture.

**EVIDENCE-BASED MEDICINE:** Making sure that care interventions are based on good scientific evidence instead of opinion.

**POPULATION MANAGEMENT:** Serving populations of people versus individuals. We are used to serving individuals, and indeed we try to treat every single patient as an individual. On the other hand, we are at our best when we also take into account providing better care for specific populations of patients, such as populations with diabetes or coronary artery disease.

*Source: Dr. Michael Soman, Group Health*

*For a complete list of current health care terms and their explanations, go to [pugetsoundbusinessjournal.com](http://pugetsoundbusinessjournal.com)*

connection marks yet another wrinkle in the evolving trend of medical organizations partnering to improve the quality of health care and to restrain its growing costs — at a time when neither the private nor public sector can afford any longer to finance health care as usual.

Earlier this year, Providence Health & Services completed an affiliation with Swedish Health Services.

Wilson said most linkages have occurred among hospitals, but the one with Group Health links Providence's phy-

sicians in Spokane with Group Health Physicians, which includes about 1,000 doctors statewide. "Our mandate," he said, "is to integrate outpatient (physician) care with inpatient (hospital) care when needed, and then transition back to outpatient care when needed." In short, he said, the aim is "to manage patient care more completely."

The linkage trend has brought with it buzzwords that many in the general public may find fuzzy or confusing — jargon such as evidence-based medicine, coor-

ordinated and integrated care, population-based medical care, and medical homes.

But the overall main idea seems simple enough. It's to provide patients with the right care, at the right time, in the right place. This entails making sure all medical professionals are kept informed about the care for any given patient, in order to avoid unnecessary costs and harm to patients. And this in turn requires a common system of electronic medical records.

Group Health and Providence have been working together for many years in the Spokane area. Group Health provides its members with health insurance and physician care, and Providence has given Group Health members access to hospital care.

Now the two organizations plan to work together still more closely in the Spokane region.

In so doing, Group Health is bringing its medical home model to Providence. Dr. Michael Soman, president of Group Health Physicians, said Group Health's system of medical homes is "one thing I think Providence is anxious to learn from us."

For Group Health, a medical home for its patients means that primary-care doctors, together with a team of other medical professionals, assume responsibility not only for each patient visit but also for overseeing all the care their patients need.

Group Health tested its medical home model in 2006 and found that compared to other Group Health clinics, medical-home patients went to emergency rooms 29 percent less often and were admitted to hospitals 6 percent less often. This proved they had received better health care, at a lower cost.

PNEURATH@BIZJOURNALS.COM | 206.876.5442W



Soman

## Matador restaurant owners serving up a barbecue house

The guys behind the popular Matador restaurants are going barbecue — upscale barbecue, mind you — and they're also about to go seafood, too.

With the opening of Kickin' Boot Whiskey Kitchen set for Aug. 16 in Seattle's Ballard neighborhood, Nathan Opper and Zak Melang will launch the first of two new concepts for them.

Kickin' Boot is a full-service Southern barbecue restaurant that — no offense, finger-lickers — puts the average barbecue joint to shame. It's big and handsome, a monument of repurposed wood that even has a view.

### BIZTALK BLOG



Glenn Drosendahl

Its barbecuing is all low and slow, with two smokers running full time. Its bar seats 75 and features Southern cocktails with premium bourbons. The menu is expansive but not expensive, and everything except the bread is made in-house.

Executive chef is Bo Maisano, who grew up in New Orleans and has worked in Seattle at Madison Park Café and The Tin Table on Capitol Hill.

Kris Moser, most recently from Il Terrazzo Carmine, is the general manager.

By early November or so, Opper and Melang plan to open a third new restaurant, a seafood place, also in Ballard, with a name yet to be determined.

The seafood restaurant will be in space that formerly housed a Thai restaurant, in the Ballard Eagles Building near the neighborhood's Centennial Bell Tower.

GLENN DROSEND AHL blogs about restaurants, chefs and food for the Puget Sound Business Journal. Read more of his posts at [pugetsoundbusinessjournal.com](http://pugetsoundbusinessjournal.com).



### Paine Field Hangar for Lease

Recently built 13,500 sq. ft. Class A hangar facility

Capacity for 2 G-IV's or G-V & 3 smaller jets

View details at [WeidnerAssets.com](http://WeidnerAssets.com)

Call Ben Katon or Kyran Hynes at (425) 821-3844