

Senior Sports

by Doug Woollen

In regard to running outside, this past winter and spring have been among the most challenging that I've been exposed to since living in this area. With cold winds and precipitation in more than one form pelting seniors brave or insane enough to jog, run or pedal in it. I have to admit that's my modus operandi. I am in that group that adheres to the belief that to maintain fitness, one needs to venture outside, regardless of the weather conditions.

After running in the cold for months, I decided that instead of doing my traditional race in February or March, Valentine's or St. Pat's respectively, doing one later when the weather is warmer would be wise. Particularly, since I battled bronchitis, which probably should have been defined as bronchial pneumonia. The Tulip Trail Run in April would be the first run of 2008. How could the weather be miserable during the Tulip Festival In Skagit County?

I had visions of fully blooming tulips fully opened to welcome the warming sun. What awaited me looked disdainfully familiar to what I had faced last winter and early spring; very cold temperatures and a wind just short of gale force. It was so cold the tulips would not show their radiant

splash of colors over the fields on the Skagit flats. They had more sense than the hundreds of runners who endured the weather and finished the race.

Even though I took first in the age division, the uncomfortable feeling similar to doing a training run in winter persisted. There definitely was no PR under those conditions. After the Tulip Run, the coffee and hot chocolate line was almost endless. Just like in February and March after a run in adverse conditions, a cup of hot cocoa was in order. At least in my home there was no long wait for the warming libation.

Maybe I should have contemplated the Washington State Senior Games (WSSG) for my initial competition for the year. At least the weather would cooperate in July for the senior games. Having participated in the WSSG for many years, the temperature is practically always ideal for track and road running, plus the many other outdoor athletic offerings provided by the WSSG. Additional outdoor events that will get you in the fresh air are soccer, softball, rowing and golf. While enjoying the competition, camaraderie and celebration of wellness, savor the almost guaranteed warm rays of the sun.

The majority of the WSG will be held July 25-27, while the remainder will be July 19-20 and August 2-3. For more information call 360-413-0148 or go to www.pugetsoundgames.com.

Local Physician Becomes First Member of New Health Plan

By Dr. David Fairbrook M.D.

As a physician with over 30 years experience working with Medicare patients in southwest Washington, I've had lots of opportunity to help them navigate through the complex system. It's a system that is filled with overwhelming amounts of information and a bureaucratic process that can stall or jeopardize quality healthcare. I have seen the frustrations and anxiety that original Medicare can cause for my patients.

As I approached my own Medicare eligibility, I looked at all my options. The problems with Medicare are clear. It does not provide most people with adequate coverage, access to physicians is declining and most beneficiaries are not adequately informed about the Medicare system. As a doctor, I want my patients to have broad choices from an insurance plan they can trust. As a patient, I want the same thing for myself but I found a clear void in the marketplace.

Last year, I worked with a group of local doctors who are a part of Physicians of Southwest Washington (PSW) who took the initiative to create a new Medicare option. PSW is an independent physician's organization that provides primary care for nearly 80% of the Medicare eligible seniors in Thurston County. Joining forces together with other like-minded physician groups, we formed Puget Sound Health Partners, one of the first new health plans approved by the state of Washington in over ten years. We offer a Medicare Advantage coordinated care health plan. The network of physician owners is an innovative creation in the healthcare industry, providing coverage to Medicare beneficiaries in Thurston, Pierce and King counties. The company founders include three of the regions largest independent provider organizations consisting of 800 physician owners, 1,600 specialists, and a hospital system. The growing network also includes over 1,200 doctors and nine hospitals that have recently joined. There is no other plan like it available in Washington.

In designing Puget Sound Health Partners, our goal was to create a plan that is good for the patients and supports the doctor-patient relationship. The physicians designed the benefit structure with

patients needs in mind, including an out-of-pocket limit on expenses, which many Medicare insurance options don't include. They made sure that patients can get the drugs they need with a benefit structure to provide Part D pharmacy services through the coverage gap (also known as the 'donut-hole') providing coverage for generic drugs at a low rate of \$5 per month for the co-payment. Our doctors knew of patients who stopped taking their maintenance generic drugs because they can't afford them. The doctors want their patients stay on their maintenance drugs to keep them well. And finally, the doctors can keep their practices open to patients with Medicare because the reimbursement rates are appropriate.

I turned 65 in October and after evaluating my options, I determined that I wanted to become the first member in the new plan. This puts me in a unique position. I am now both receiving care from the plan and providing care for patients in the plan.

I like that we are a private company based in Puget Sound that focuses exclusively on Medicare. As a doctor working within the plan, I know that our goal is to allow patients to see doctors more often so the disease process is kept under control. In many cases I find a lack of continuity of care for patients on Medicare and I think we can change that by empowering patients. I believe that we offer an additional choice in the marketplace with doctors, members and the health plan working together to optimize member health with costs that are affordable and predictable. This new partnership will simplify access to quality care for people like me who are Medicare eligible.

I made my choice by carefully evaluating the options available in the marketplace. Even though it is a new plan, they have a team in place with years of experience dealing with Medicare. As a physician in the plan, I know the focus is on quality patient care for a population that needs it the most. As the first member of the plan, I believe that is best for everyone.

Dr. Fairbrook recently retired from his position as the senior physician at the Clinic at Panorama City. The clinic is part of Physicians of Southwest Washington, an independent physician organization in Olympia, Washington. He is now working part time as a hospitalist. Dr. Fairbrook was a practicing physician in the Olympia area for over 30 years. He completed his residency at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota after graduating from the University Of Washington School Of Medicine.



American Burial & Cremation Services

Offering Affordable
Cremation Arrangements **\$795**
Olympia • 705-2857 24 hrs.
1-800-575-8823

Member of the Better Business Bureau

LOOSE DENTURES?

Can't eat?

We have the

MODERN SOLUTION!

• Fast • Affordable • Easy

"These are not your grandma and grandpa's dentures ..."



For a complimentary consult, call ...

(360) 426-9711

William J. Busacca, DDS, PS

1525 Olympic Hwy. North, Shelton, WA 98584



The Smile Express

DOCS
American Dental Association
Academy of General Dentistry
American Academy of Cosmetic Dentistry