

OUR VIEW

Project Access a step to broader health care

We're pleased that leaders in Whatcom County's medical field are helping find solutions to problems with the health care system.

We hope doctors will join Project Access, a new program created by a coalition of doctors, hospital and health care officials that is aimed at improving access to medical care in the county. Project Access officials are asking doctors to work with poor, elderly and uninsured people without compensation. In return, Project Access workers will try to get rid of the hassles of serving low-income patients and help doctors work through Medicaid bureaucracy.

Project Access will also be a center for patients hoping to find insurance or a doctor. Staff members will also help low-income patients enroll for Medicaid and other government-funded insurance programs. Project Access was created by the Whatcom Alliance for Healthcare Access, a coalition including private doctors, St. Joseph Hospital, community health centers and the St. Luke's Foundation. The overall goal is to find a home for more people who currently head to the emergency room when they become sick because they don't have their own doctors. An estimated 13.4 percent of adults and 7.1 percent of children in

Whatcom County don't have health insurance.

We hope doctors will sign up with Project Access to help deal with this huge problem in the industry and in our society.

They already are being asked to care for people who can't pay. Project Access can serve as an advocate helping them get reimbursement, and a regulator making sure patients who need free care are distributed evenly among doctors in the county. We understand that this will require some doctors to make a greater sacrifice than they already are and we salute those doctors who step forward to do this.

Access to health care and the rising costs of high care are the two biggest problems in our country, in terms of health and in economic terms. The resolution of these issues is important no matter your political point of view or your wealth.

Project Access seems a good starting point locally to dealing with the crisis. We applaud those who created it and we hope that eventually it will lead to more people getting the health care they need without adding so much to the expense of the system.