

Premera Blue Cross, Kinwell Medical Group Make Strides in Increasing Access to Quality, Affordable Primary Care

Kinwell clinics see a 67 percent increase in patient visits while Premera's community investments continue to thrive

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Mountlake Terrace, Wash. – Premera Blue Cross, one of the largest not-for-profit health plans in the Pacific Northwest, and Kinwell Medical Group are marking Kinwell's third anniversary by announcing a 67 percent increase in total patient visits in the last year, surpassing 79,000 appointments.

Kinwell serves patients with Premera Blue Cross and LifeWise Health Plan of Washington coverage. The Washington-based network, which includes 16 locations and a statewide virtual clinic, has also added several new services to broaden their advanced primary care model. In addition, strategic investments Premera made in the primary care workforce pipeline are continuing to improve access to care for communities across the state.

In 2024, Kinwell hired 28 new clinicians across the state, including behavioral health specialists, physicians, physician assistants, and nurse practitioners. Kinwell's model prioritizes stronger patient-provider relationships by offering longer appointment times and compensating clinicians for the quality of care delivered instead of the number of patients treated. Through a team-based approach, clinicians bring whole-person care to the forefront with:

- **Integrated behavioral health:** Kinwell's primary care providers can diagnose and treat behavioral health concerns, and they are supported by Kinwell's behavioral health specialists who can see patients for appointments, too. Kinwell also offers online group classes to help people learn coping skills for challenging emotions and situations.
- **Lifestyle medicine:** Clinicians incorporate aspects of lifestyle medicine principles, such as nutrition, quality of sleep, and daily activity, to fully support a patient's mental, physical, and emotional health. Kinwell also offers virtual nutrition-focused group classes as part of its lifestyle medicine program.
- **Health coaching:** Patients enrolled in Kinwell's lifestyle medicine group classes can schedule one-on-one health coaching appointments at no additional cost. A health coach helps patients set goals and develop plans to reach them.
- **Virtual care:** Patients can make a virtual appointment with the clinician they see in person or establish care with Kinwell's dedicated online clinicians from anywhere in Washington.

"When our members told us how hard it was to find a primary care provider, we knew we couldn't wait on the sidelines for this problem to solve itself," said Lee McGrath, executive vice

president of health care services for Premera. “We worked together with Kinwell to create solutions across the state – all throughout Puget Sound and reaching from Spokane and Pasco to Bellingham, Poulsbo and Olympia. Kinwell designed a model that thoughtfully centers their patients and removes barriers for our members seeking high-quality care, which can make a real difference in their overall health.”

This approach to care is well-received by Kinwell patients. Kinwell has a Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 85, more than double the [industry average](#). NPS measures how likely customers are to recommend a company’s services to others.

“We’re dedicated to building a new way to get care and we’re grateful for the trust patients have placed in us,” said Dr. Mack Hinson, president of Kinwell Medical Group. “Our patients and clinicians alike are seeing the benefits from our focus on whole-person wellness. We look forward to the years ahead as we continue our work in always centering our patients’ needs.”

Since opening their first clinic in East Wenatchee in December 2021, Kinwell has expanded to 17 clinics across Washington, which includes its statewide virtual care clinic.

Committing to broadened access to care

Research from [KFF](#) shows Washington only has 39 percent of the primary care providers needed to ensure adequate access to care for all residents. Increasing capacity for training opportunities and residency programs is an important part of how Premera is working to address this continued provider shortage.

Since 2018, Premera has invested nearly \$18 million in bolstering the primary care workforce pipeline in Washington, particularly in rural areas. Studies show healthcare providers who train in rural settings are more likely to practice in a rural area.

Results of these investments include:

- **The UW Premera Rural Nursing Health Initiative**, which has placed more than 20 graduates in year-long advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP) fellowships in rural clinics throughout Washington. These fellows are fully integrated into the clinics, enhancing their medical training and providing care for community members.
- **Rural training residency programs** at Washington State University’s Elson S. Floyd College of Medicine and Pacific Northwest University of Health Science. Eight residents have joined the programs to date.

Premera also signed on to the Health Care Authority’s payer coalition, the Washington Multi-Payer Collaborative. Together with other payers, purchasers, and providers, Premera is committed to changing the way primary care is delivered and supported to ensure better access to care.

For more information about how Premera is supporting the community, visit [PremeraWellBeyond.org](https://www.premera.com/WellBeyond). Additional details about Kinwell and its clinics can be found at [KinwellHealth.com](https://www.kinwellhealth.com).

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About Premera Blue Cross

Premera Blue Cross, a not-for-profit, independent licensee of the Blue Cross Blue Shield Association based in Mountlake Terrace, Wash., is a leading health plan in the Pacific Northwest, providing comprehensive health benefits and tailored services to more than 2.75 million people, from individuals to Fortune 100 companies. For more information, visit www.premera.com.

About Kinwell

Launched in 2021, [Kinwell Medical Group](#) is a primary care option exclusively for those insured by Premera Blue Cross or LifeWise Health Plan of Washington, and for BlueCard holders. Kinwell is a Washington state-based medical group, focused on opening clinics across the region and elevating the primary care experience with more attention, less complexity and a better relationship between patients and their healthcare teams. Kinwell embraces a whole-health approach to primary care that includes diet, fitness and behavioral health. It is also dedicated to building great places to work, where diverse ideas and cultures focus on the common goal of nurturing patient health.

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