



1000 Dutch Ridge Road
Beaver, PA 15009

February 27, 2004

Marc P. Volavka
Executive Director
Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council
225 Market Street, Suite 400
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Mr. Volavka:

Heritage Valley Health System and the Medical Center, Beaver appreciate the opportunity to respond and comment on the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) report on Coronary Artery Bypass Graft (CABG) Surgery for calendar year 2002.

Since the inception of our open heart surgery program in 1994, The Medical Center, Beaver uses a comprehensive clinical data base and quality improvement process to measure and monitor surgical risk, co-morbid conditions, postoperative complications, and mortalities to consistently improve the quality of our surgical program. We participate with and measure our clinical data against the Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) and the Pennsylvania Regional Health Initiative (PRHI) benchmarks. We are consistently at or better than STS and PRHI benchmarks for postoperative mortalities as well as other clinical indicators.

In addition, we routinely review our mortalities and complications. On review of our 2002 surgical mortalities, we note that all these patients were in the high to extremely high morbidity risk group and, on peer review, the care provided to these patients was deemed clinically appropriate and within the current standard of care.

It is our belief that thirty-day post discharge outcomes are difficult to correlate directly to the coronary bypass surgical procedure. These patients are all very high risk and have co-morbid conditions, not relevant to their cardiac care, that can compromise their post hospital management and contribute, if not cause, the adverse outcomes.

We appreciate and continue to support the efforts of PHC4 to examine and report hospital and physician clinical performance for CABG procedures as well as other inpatient clinical services. We, as always, will use this data with our comprehensive CABG data and quality improvement processes in our ongoing efforts to ensure The Medical Center, Beaver and its surgeons provide open-heart surgical programs of superior quality and outcomes for the community we serve.

Sincerely,

Michael J. Culyba, MD
Vice President / Medical Director