

Clarion Hospital

April 9, 2001

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

Dear Mr. Volavka,

This letter is written in response to the Pennsylvania Healthcare's Cost Containment Council regarding Cesarean section rates. In assessing the data from the joint project of the Pennsylvania Healthcare Counsel, I think several issues need clarification. It was just recently that Healthy People 2000 was encouraging a Cesarean section rate for 15 percent in the year 2000. A recent comment by Dr. Stephen Clark, who is a well-respected perinatologist in Utah, suggested that the pendulum is certainly swinging and the project goal of 15 percent was "completely unrealistic". It is interesting to me that the cost counsel is now suggesting 19 percent. It is unclear to me where the data to support this rate is obtained.

In today's medical legal environment, the ultimate outcome is a healthy child and a healthy mother. It is difficult to assess data that compares tertiary centers with community hospital centers and many experts have suggested that trying to lump a single Cesarean section rate globally across those type of centers is also unrealistic.

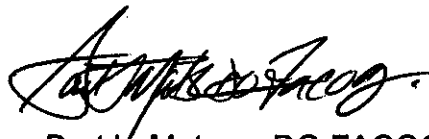
We have adopted a policy of practicing conservative obstetrics at Clarion Hospital with obviously healthy outcomes, shorter length of stays and improved cost savings. In reviewing your data, there is no comment on perinatal morbidity and mortality or maternal morbidity and mortality, both of which are significant outcome measures. We do not force trials of labor in our mothers with previous Cesarean sections at Clarion Hospital. The ACOG Technical Bulletin (July 1999) strongly supports this, as well as most editorials by experts in the field today.

Our patients are thoroughly counseled regarding trial of labor and the possibility of VBAC. When presented with options for trial of labor and VBAC, the patient makes an informed decision. We believe our patients have that ultimate decision. Subsequently, the Cesarean section rate at Clarion Hospital is higher due to the number of elective repeat Cesareans performed at the patient's request. Clarion Hospital also has a clinic population that is at risk with maternal obesity, diabetes, and fetal macrosomia, just to name a few of the medical and obstetric complications seen in our practice.

We review our Cesarean section rates on a monthly basis. Without the 24 hour in-house availability of neonatal services and anesthesia services, our decision making process is geared ultimately to a healthy child and healthy mother. Clearly, we succeed with shorter length of stays and cost savings.

If there is any other information that we can provide, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bart L. Matson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B" and "M".

Bart L. Matson, DO FACOG
Chairman, Dept. of Obstetrics/Gynecology
Clarion Hospital

BLM/dh