

**Medical Staff/Medical Education**

October 26, 2006

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

In Re: Response to the Pennsylvania Hospital Cost Commission Calendar Year 2005 Hospital Acquired Infection Report

Dear Mr. Volavka:


Altoona Regional Health System holds the safety and welfare of the patients entrusted to its care as the highest priority. For this reason, we are involved in many national patient safety initiatives. We are fully committed to the 100K Lives Campaign with multiple initiatives including the Rapid Response Team, reduction of surgical infections, reduction in central line infections, reductions in ventilator associated pneumonias and its cardiac care initiatives. We are also committed to the VHA Transformation of the ICU program with repeated emphasis on many of these issues. The national concerns about the growing rate of methacillian resistant staff aureus infections have led us to work with the Center for Disease Control in their initiatives on this project.

The PHC4 data in this report shows us to be doing very well in many aspects of controlling hospital acquired infection. Although data collection methods and comparison between facilities is often easily misinterpreted, we welcome the report to help us focus our efforts. We feel that even one hospital acquired infection is too many.

The noted high mortality in several of our areas is a direct result of our acute care inpatient Palliative Care Unit. Even though we are not providing aggressive care to these patients because of their wishes, as they are dealing in the terminal stages of disease, such as cancer, these numbers are frequently used to show our success rate in preventing death, when often death is the inevitable outcome. Most facilities have eliminated these acute care inpatient units because of the appearance it gives with such data.

Again, thank you for allowing us to respond to the numbers in this survey. Patient safety and infection prevention are among our highest priorities. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,



David L. Cowger, M.D., FACEP, CPE  
Senior VP, Quality/Medical Affairs  
Chief Medical Officer  
Altoona Regional Health System

DLC/bac