

October 24, 2006

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to respond to the Hospital Performance Report concerning hospital-acquired infections.


Our total number of hospital acquired infections for 2005 was 88. Of these 88 cases, 61 infections were reported at the Gunderson Rehabilitative Unit. This unit serves not just Hazleton General Hospital patients, but patients requiring rehabilitation from other facilities. Any infection discovered at the Gunderson Unit must be reported here, regardless of the point of origin of the patient. The vast majority of these infections are urinary tract infections associated with post-operative Foley catheters. The Gunderson Unit has an initiative to remove all Foley catheters as soon as possible as part of the rehab process. However, these infections are still part of our report, and inflate our overall total number of infections.

Our overall infection rate per 1,000 cases was 13.0. This is not much different from the statewide average of 12.2 cases per 1,000. If we were able to eliminate infections, which originated at other facilities, our infection rate would be much lower, and would probably correspond to our Peer Group rate of 9.3 cases per 1,000. Our mortality rate is lower than both the statewide and peer group rates, attesting to our rapid diagnosis and treatment of hospital-acquired infections.

We have a very aggressive infection control process consisting of regular surveillance rounds and staff education. Any suspected infection clusters are investigated, and the findings are shared with all departments at the Quality Management meetings. These findings are also forwarded to the Board of Directors.

Hazleton General Hospital is committed to providing quality health care to the Greater Hazleton area. We are pleased to see that the Hospital Performance Report validates our hard work.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Barbara A. Vilushis'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning and a wavy, undulating line that ends in a small hook.

Barbara A. Vilushis, DO
Associate Medical Director, GHHA