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October 13, 2003

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

Latrobe Area Hospital welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council's 2002 "Hospital Performance Report". We support and share in your commitment to making Pennsylvania a leading provider of high quality, cost effective healthcare.

Overall, we are pleased that our mortality rates, length of stay, readmissions for complications and charges are lower than statewide averages. Latrobe Area Hospital shows a significantly increased mortality rate for the following conditions: COPD, Kidney Failure, Infectious Pneumonia and Heart Attack. I would like to address these variances.

As a primary care community hospital, our patients are frequently transferred to tertiary care facilities. In 2002, 63% of patients presenting to our hospital with AMI were transferred for elective procedures or intervention. As these patients are stabilized and treated in our institution, this population should be included in any statistical analysis of mortality. By eliminating this population our data mainly includes patients that are less amenable to intervention and, therefore, the mortality data will usually appear higher than expected.

While the presence of a "do not resuscitate" (DNR) order does not exclude patients from receiving intervention or treatment, there is a high correlation between executing a DNR order and rejecting aggressive intervention. The following data shows the rate of patients who expired with a DNR order written by their physician:

Heart Attack - 22 of 28 = 80%
 Renal Failure - 14 of 15 = 93%
 Infectious Pneumonia - 18 of 19 = 95%
 COPD - 14 of 15 = 93%

Each of the above mortalities were reviewed by our Quality Services staff. No quality of care, clinical process, or individual practitioner issues were identified that contributed to the deaths.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this report. If you have further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas P. Gessner M.D."

Thomas P. Gessner, M.D.
 Medical Director

A health care
 organization of



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 America's Health™