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altoona hospital
CENTER FOR MEDICINE

JAMES W. BARNER
PRESIDENT/CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

September 16, 2004

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

Altoona Hospital welcomes the opportunity to comment on the statistical results from the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council's Fiscal Year 2003 Hospital Performance Report.

To begin, we would like to assure you and the public that all cases of patient mortality at Altoona Hospital are thoroughly reviewed by Peer Review Committees of Physicians for any deficiencies. Furthermore, the cases of mortality contained in the latest Hospital Performance Report received additional review and we found that the physicians provided excellent medical care and used sound judgement in their decision making.

Our review did note that in every case of mortality, the patient presented to Altoona Hospital with severe chronic diseases, as well as in critical and unstable conditions. Aggressive life-saving measures were possible in some of the cases. However, the families most often refused the measures be performed, most often due to the long and complex battles that their loved ones already endured due to the disease. As well, in most cases living wills and other advanced directives directed that no heroic measures were to be undertaken under any circumstance to prolong their lives.

Altoona Hospital welcomes the opportunity to respond to your review and appreciates the data you have been able to provide. We will use this data as yet another opportunity for us to improve and strengthen our ability to provide high quality, cost-efficient care.

Sincerely,

R. Scott Magley, MD
Senior Vice-President
Chair, Department of Emergency Medicine

Michael-Gerard J. Moncman, DO
President, Medical Staff

cc: Mr. James W. Barner, President/Chief Executive Officer