

September 16, 2004

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this year's report.

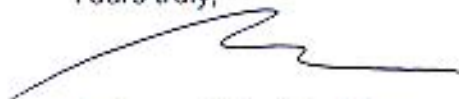
We are very pleased with the results of the data presented to us by the Health Care Cost Containment Council. We have seen a great deal of improvement in our data over the last few years, due in a large part to an aggressive team approach to quality improvement throughout the Greater Hazleton Health Alliance. This team effort consists of case management, discharge planners, nursing, medical staff and administrative personnel working together to improve the quality of services provided by Alliance facilities.

We are particularly pleased with the above-average ratings we received in the categories of COPD, Congestive Heart Failure and Pneumonia. These diagnoses have been particularly problematic in the past, and it gives us a good feeling to know that our hard work in these areas has not been in vain.

This year's data reveals only one area of increased focus: increased readmissions for complications in DRG 202, Cirrhosis and Alcoholic Hepatitis. There were only 9 admissions for this DRG included in this study, with 3 patients being readmitted to a hospital within 30 days of discharge. Of the 3 patients who were readmitted, only 1 was readmitted for a complication related to the primary diagnosis. The other 2 patients were admitted for pneumonia. Given the small sample size in this particular DRG, I do not believe that this is a statistically significant result.

We at the Hazleton St. Joseph Campus of the Greater Hazleton Health Alliance are committed to providing quality, cost effective health care to our customers. We look forward to working with you in the future to achieve this goal.

Yours truly,



Barbara A. Vilushis, DO
Associate Medical Director, GHHA