

September 13, 2005

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, especially in the area of Mortality Analysis. This is 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.

This year's data reveals only two areas of increased focus: increased readmissions for complications for Aspiration Pneumonia and Medical Back Problems. These cases involve patients who were readmitted within 30 days of discharge for either a complication or an infection. All the medical records pertaining to these diagnoses were reviewed. These patients received appropriate care during their hospital stays. There is no evidence of premature discharge on any of these patients. The majority of the readmissions for Aspiration Pneumonia occurred more than 14 days after admission, suggesting a new process, rather than a complication. The majority of the readmissions for Medical Back Problems were due to a small number of debilitated patients who developed infections, such as pneumonia, which, though possibly related to their back problems, were not present at the time of their discharges.

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