

November 23, 2015

Joseph Martin  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council  
225 Market Street, Suite 400  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Mr. Martin,

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

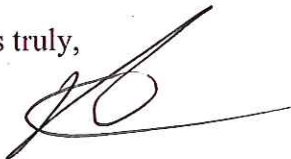
We are very pleased with the results of the data presented to us by the Health Care Cost Containment Council. We have a very aggressive team approach to quality improvement, which has been very successful in addressing previous issues.

This year's data contains only one area of focus: aspiration pneumonia mortalities. Mortalities are reviewed for quality and appropriateness of care as part of the peer review process. These nine particular cases were reviewed again. Each patient received appropriate treatment for his or her condition. We found these patients very elderly with an average age of 80.3 years. Approximately 90% were DNR patients. In almost 60% of the cases, the patients and/or families refused aggressive treatment. Therefore, we feel this represents an end of life issue.

This is the first time that we have fallen out in this particular category. We have also followed strictly the coding guidelines associated with this disease process.

Our commitment to providing cost-effective, quality health care to our community drives our corporate vision. We look forward to your reports for use as benchmarks in our continuing quality improvement projects.

Yours truly,



Anthony Valente, MD  
Vice President of Medical Affairs, Lehigh Valley Hospital-Hazleton  
And



Barbara A. Vilushis, DO  
Associate Medical Director, Lehigh Valley Hospital-Hazleton