

St. Joseph Medical Center

December 1, 1999

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

VIA FACSIMILE AND FED EX

Dear Mr. Volavka:

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the soon to be released 1998 Hospital Performance Report.

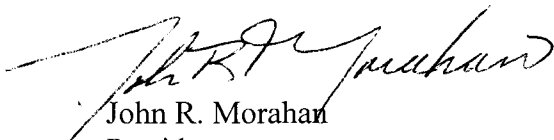
The data for St. Joseph Medical Center suggests that our risk-adjusted mortality rates for DRG 127 Heart Failure and Shock and DRG 130 Vascular Disorders except Heart were higher than expected. We have reviewed the clinical data and would like to provide additional information on these cases.

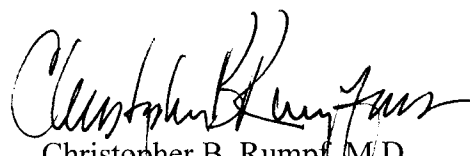
Congestive Heart Failure is often the end stage of significant heart disease due to multiple causes and worsened by many concomitant diseases. Our review of the 29 deaths reveals that 20 of the 29 patients who expired had DNR orders, or advance directives, before or at the time of admission and should be excluded from the sample. With these patients excluded the actual mortality rate is less than the expected rate.

Our review of the deaths in DRG 130 reveals that three of the five patients had advance directives or DNR orders requesting non-aggressive treatments of their life-threatening conditions.

Based on these circumstances, we believe that the Hospital Performance Report would be enhanced by excluding cases where patients and families have decided on palliative care, thus reflecting more accurately the increasing role that patients are taking in making important choices about their healthcare.

Sincerely,


John R. Morahan
President


Christopher B. Rumpf, M.D.
Vice President, Medical Affairs