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December 9, 2002

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

The following are the comments submitted on behalf of Monongahela Valley Hospital, Inc. in response to the release of the Hospital Performance Report for Calendar Year 2001.

The Hospital was identified as having a statistically significant high mortality rate in two (2) areas: Abdominal Hysterectomy and Complicated Stomach and Small Intestinal Operations.

In regards to the abdominal hysterectomy findings, the Hospital treated 77 patients having this procedure during 2001 and one (1) patient died. This patient had an uneventful operative and initial postoperative course. On the second day postop, the patient suddenly and unexpectedly collapsed. Resuscitative measures were immediately instituted, however, they were unfortunately unsuccessful. While it is not common in this procedure, postoperative complications can arise following any major surgical procedure. The Hospital does not believe that one (1) death out of 77 cases warrants a finding of statistical significance.

Review was also conducted of the deaths that occurred in DRG 154, Stomach and Small Intestinal Operations, complicated. A total of 26 patients were treated in this DRG and six (6) patients died. The average age of the patients who died was 79 years old. These patients had previous medical conditions which included previous stroke, history of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, chronic obstructive lung disease and chronic irregular heart beats. Five (5) of these patients had stomach cancer and two (2) also had involvement of the esophagus. These patients also had malnutrition from their underlying condition and metastatic cancer to the surrounding lymph nodes and liver. The sixth patient had severe GI bleeding with multiple, significant medical problems and the family signed a Do Not Resuscitate order after admission.

The Hospital has an effective Performance Improvement program and all of these cases were reviewed as part of that program. Following review of the cases, no areas of concern were identified.

The Hospital's mission is to enhance the health of the residents of the mid-Mon Valley and the Hospital continues its commitment to provide our community with the highest quality care to meet their health care needs.

Very truly yours,

Donna L. Ramusivich  
Senior Vice President

DLR:kq