



155 Wilson Avenue WASHINGTON, PA 15301
TEL 724-225-7000 FAX 724-222-7316
www.washingtonhospital.org

December 9, 2002

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

Re: Hospital Performance Report Formal Comment

Dear Sir:

The Washington Hospital received a "higher than expected" mortality rate for abdominal hysterectomy patients in 2001. This represented two deaths out of 176 abdominal hysterectomies. Whereas any death is certainly non-desirable, there are some circumstances that mitigate against generally successful outcomes. I would like to offer a few of the particulars involved in our two unfortunate outcomes.

The first patient was a 92-year old female with severe shortness of breath, ascites, and a past history of coronary artery disease requiring stenting. She underwent a total abdominal hysterectomy and bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy for Stage III ovarian carcinoma with metastasis to the bowel and liver. She died on her third postoperative day of acute renal failure.

The second patient was an 81-year old female with severe nausea, weight loss, and incapacitating weakness. She had a history of hypertension and syncope secondary to complete heart block (necessitating a pacemaker). After appropriate preoperative work-up, she also underwent a total abdominal hysterectomy and bilateral salpingo-oophorectomy for extensive ovarian carcinoma. Because of metastasis, she also required an omentectomy and a small bowel resection with primary anastomosis. She did well postoperatively until dying of an unexpected respiratory arrest on her sixth postoperative day.

Both instances of postoperative complications were non-preventable and, unfortunately, fatal.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer these comments on our Abdominal Hysterectomy Mortality Rate.

Sincerely yours,

Telford W. Thomas
President and CEO

WPP/sma