

**Medical Staff/Medical Education**

September 20, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

Altoona Regional Health System appreciates the opportunity to respond to our data published by the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council relating to our Hospital Performance Report October 1, 2005 through September 30, 2006.

In addition to constantly monitoring all the care we provide to our patients to improve outcomes and patient safety, all cases of less than optimal outcome are reviewed very carefully to assure we are providing the highest quality of care.

Many of the patients that did not fair well in the current reporting period had pre-existing multi-organ disease compounded by very advanced age. Patient and family directives frequently limited the amount of support we could provide.

The category of respiratory failure without mechanical ventilation is a typical case in point. Aggressive care in the respiratory failure patient often requires mechanical ventilation to prevent a serious outcome. Patient's end of life wishes often preclude this option.

We are a certified stroke center, and as such, are very liberal at re-admission of stroke patients who may be having some immediate health issues. Our review of these cases has shown excellent care has been provided.

We wish the public to know that the safety and quality of care provided to our community is our number one goal.

Sincerely yours,



David L. Cowger, M.D.  
Senior Vice President, Quality/Medical affairs  
Chief Medical Officer  
Altoona Regional Health System

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