

November 25, 2014

Joseph Martin, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council
225 Market St.
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 overall 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.

This year's data contains an area of focus regarding readmission categories, specifically in the categories of heart failure and infectious pneumonia. As you know, hospital readmissions are a problem in hospitals across the country. There are many factors that affect hospital readmissions. Some of these factors are out of our control, such as patients' financial situations. Some readmissions are unavoidable, such as readmission for end-stage disease. Other readmissions are caused by problems completely unrelated to the previous admission.

We take our readmissions very seriously. Each case is reviewed for a number of factors, including stability at the time of discharge and appropriateness of the discharge plan. We have put a multi-disciplinary team together, charged with reviewing our discharge processes, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing changes based on our assessments. We are also looking at improving our transition-of-care process, particularly in the area of outpatient compliance. While we cannot eliminate all readmissions, we are confident that we will be successful in reducing our overall readmission rate through our quality improvement initiative..

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,


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