



Joseph Martin, Executive Director
Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council

Dear Mr. Martin,

I'd like to take this opportunity to commend the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council (PHC4) for enabling greater transparency for patients seeking the highest value in their healthcare services. As a newcomer to the Commonwealth, I am impressed with the detail and transparency of the data provided by your organization which clearly allows consumers the opportunity to compare the cost and quality of care of numerous healthcare providers throughout the State of Pennsylvania.

At Community Medical Center (CMC), we embrace this transparency in the pursuit of value in healthcare. One of our key focus areas is cardiovascular care including our cardiac surgery program. As healthcare providers are acutely aware, heart disease causes more than one in every four deaths in the United States according to the *Centers for Disease control and Prevention*. In 2010 alone, heart disease cost the country \$316.4 billion.

PHC4's mission to deliver comparative information about cardiac surgery providers to consumers is most appreciated by our organization and assists us in identifying opportunities to contain costs and improve the quality of care we deliver. Thanks in part to PHC4, CMC is able to track the quality outcomes our cardiac surgery team has attained as we focus on building a team approach to cardiovascular care which has and will continue to provide the greatest value for the citizens of Northeast Pennsylvania.

We are proud that CMC's Cardiac Surgery team has gained "better than expected outcomes" in 7 of the past 9 reports and has never earned a black circle signifying "worse than expected" outcomes. These results over the long term demonstrate the dedication to quality and attention to value CMC's Cardiac Surgery team puts forth with each patient and every surgery.

Given that each cardiac surgery program is statistically compared (with proper risk adjustment) to the statewide average, however, we believe it is difficult for programs with lower volumes to distinguish themselves in a one or two year cycle. In fact, only outcomes that occur more often than mortality, such as readmissions, afford smaller programs the opportunity to differential themselves. Therefore, we believe it would be useful for consumers to be able to aggregate data over a longer time horizon. Specifically, we believe it would be useful for PHC4 to incorporate on their web site the ability to cumulate data over all years where data has been reported.

Lastly, it will become increasingly more important to be able to stratify programs by "value" and we would welcome the opportunity to speak with you about possible scoring methodologies. We believe such an approach could make PHC4's Cardiac Surgery Report even more effective in helping patients to comparison shop for top quality heart programs that offer the most value.

Pennsylvanians and healthcare providers in the state are indeed fortunate to have PHC4 in place and passionately pursuing their mission of transparency, quality and value. At CMC we will move forward together with PHC4 to empower consumers with the best information for making informed decision about their healthcare.

Sincerely,
Robert P. Steigmeyer
President & Chief Executive Officer
Community Medical Center Healthcare System
Scranton, PA