



**ALLEGHENY  
GENERAL HOSPITAL**

WEST PENN ALLEGHENY HEALTH SYSTEM

320 EAST NORTH AVENUE, PITTSBURGH, PA 15212-4772

412-359-3131

May 2, 2005

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

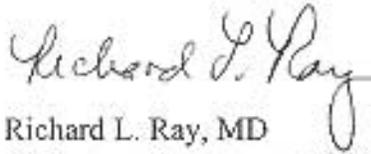
Allegheny General Hospital would like to thank the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council for the invitation to review and comment on the Hip and Knee Replacement preview data, representing Fiscal Year 2002. While we appreciate the opportunity to access clinical effectiveness benchmarks, it is important to note that the inclusion of outdated data in any type of outcomes report, diminishes the meaningfulness of the report. The more current the data, the more value there is to both consumers and providers alike.

Through our ongoing performance improvement efforts, we utilize various sources of information to monitor the quality of our patient care. A key part of any improvement activity is the measurement of success. In the Fiscal Year 2002 Hip and Knee report, the data indicates that we have a higher than expected occurrence rate within the combined Deep Vein Thrombosis/Pulmonary Embolism category. We acknowledge that venous thrombosis and thromboembolic conditions are serious and controversial problems, which may follow orthopaedic procedures. Patients with these conditions frequently are asymptomatic and therefore, the reported incidence of thrombophlebitis may reflect how aggressively the diagnosis is pursued rather than actual differences in occurrence. The ultimate goal of treatment and preventive measures is to avoid pulmonary embolization.

During Fiscal Years 2003, 2004 and 2005 to-date, that same Deep Vein Thrombosis/Pulmonary Embolism occurrence data would indicate that Allegheny General Hospital has been successful in reducing the rate of these occurrences. We are proud but never satisfied with the improvements that we have made, and we will continue to closely monitor our occurrence rates in these two areas.

In closing, we appreciate the efforts of the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council in taking a leading role in comparing hospital performance, and we will continue to support this effort. Allegheny General Hospital remains committed to providing the highest quality of care to the community we serve.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Ray, MD  
Chairman, Department of Orthopaedics



Connie M. Cibrone  
President & CEO

cc: Duke Rupert, Vice President, Operations  
Stuart Van Kirk, Director, Department of Orthopaedics  
Pamela Zajdel, PHC4 Contact