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May 2, 2005

Mark P. Volavka, Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Healthcare Cost Containment Council  
225 Market St., Suite 400  
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Dear Mr. Volavka:

This letter is in response to the council's report on total hip and knee replacements, FY2002. I applaud the council's work as a watchdog of quality as well as cost containment. I am not sure of the council's impact but we as surgeons pay very close attention. Keep up the good work.

In the total hip and knee replacement report FY2002 the first classification is listed as a deep joint infection/device problem analysis. We as surgeons take infection very seriously as a dreaded complication of joint replacement. We have strived to get the number of infections to the lowest possible. While device problems or mechanical problems associated with joint replacements are also of concern, generally these problems are not nearly at the severity level as joint infection either as an outcome indicator or as an expense in management. Reviewing my own cases which fell into this category showed no infections, but returning to surgery either for manipulation or a change in the implant to optimize the functional outcome. Everyone gets a little jumpy when a high infection rate is cited. Lumping these two problems in the same heading is misleading.

This criticism is not a major one. Anyone interested in true outcome and not headlines arrives at a more accurate picture on perusing the actual cases.

Once again thank you for your efforts on behalf of everyone in the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,

Daniel P. Hely, M.D.

DPH/jmm