



October 3, 2003

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to your "2002 Hospital Performance Report." Pinnacle Health System recognizes the importance and value of PHC4 and supports the intent of the Council in publishing this information.

The total inpatient cases included in the 28 conditions listed in the report represent 22% of the total inpatients treated at Pinnacle Health Hospitals from October 1, 2001 to September 30, 2002. We are pleased to see that none of the conditions listed in the printed report have a mortality rate higher than expected.

Of the 28 conditions listed in the report, a higher than expected percentage of outliers with long length of stay is reported in one group, Congestive Heart Failure (CHF). Of the 747 patients treated for CHF in 2002 at Pinnacle Health Hospitals, 67 (8.8%) were rated as outliers with length of stay longer than expected. CHF is a complex disease which often occurs in the presence of other chronic and acute conditions. The average age of the patients was 73 years old. Only 58% of the outliers with longer than expected length of stay were discharged to home versus 80% of those patients who had length of stay within the expected range. In addition, 46% of those outliers discharged to home required home health care services. Only 20% of the patients with length of stay in the expected range required home health care services. This data indicates that the length of stay outlier patients had more complex health care needs.

A number of multi-disciplinary teams work within Pinnacle Health System to evaluate and address issues related to many high volume diagnoses. The Heart Failure Committee reviews aggregate data and management of CHF patients. Pinnacle Health Hospitals participate in the ADHERE Acute Decompensated Heart Failure National Data Registry program which is studying the medical management of patients hospitalized with acute heart failure to improve patient outcomes. Heart Failure is also one of the CORE Measures Pinnacle Health Hospitals reports to JCAHO. In early 2003, the departments of Cardiology, Medicine, and Family Practice implemented a collaborative approach to reviewing CHF care and improving outcomes. Continuous monitoring of outcomes shows positive trends as a result of this program. Our Heart Failure Clinic continues to demonstrate positive patient outcomes and was recognized with a 2003 HAP Achievement Award. An effort to increase referrals to this program is underway. In addition, a major system initiative was implemented in October 2002 to reduce length of

stay. The average length of stay for DRG 127 has decreased by 1 day from our baseline measurement. The percentage of outliers with length of stay greater than 15 days has declined as a result of the program also.

Pinnacle Health Hospitals will continue to take seriously our responsibility for being a non-profit community hospital and our role to provide services to all patients who are admitted, or transferred in, to our facilities for treatment.

Again, we thank you for the opportunity to comment on the information included in your latest report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Roger Longenderfer, MD".

Roger Longenderfer, MD
President and CEO

