

St. Joseph Medical Center

October 13, 2003

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

Dear Mr. Volavka:

St. Joseph Medical Center is appreciative of the opportunity to respond to the PHC4 Hospital Performance Report. We are committed to improving the health and wellness of the residents of Berks County as we enter our 131st year of community service

After thoroughly reviewing the data and the analyses provided by PHC4, we have determined the following:

- That the advanced age (average of 82 years) of the deceased patients in this study, their severity rating in terms of the multiple conditions they suffered from and the fact that we followed their end of life instructions—most had Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders—are the only reasons for mortality higher than expected in two categories. Our case-by-case analysis uncovered no clinical issues with regard to physicians or departments.
- On the issue of Length of Stay (LOS), we have thoroughly reviewed all of the patient charts for outliers and have determined that discharges were commensurate with the level of expert care provided through our outstanding Cardiology and Pulmonary clinical programs. This is due in large measure to our strong treatment protocols, in combination with our Intensivists program, which places critically ill patients under the care of specially trained and accredited critical care doctors.

As it relates to DNRs, St. Joseph Medical Center deeply respects a patient's—and their loved ones'—roles in ethically addressing end of life care. We abide by each patient's express instructions when the prospect of returning to a functional life is absent. Many of our elderly patients choose St Joseph for their care because of the excellence we have demonstrated in care of the elderly and in End of Life Care.

Sincerely,



Samuel Alfano, DO, MMM
Vice President, Medical Affairs

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