

 **Abington Memorial Hospital**

1200 Old York Road, Abington, PA 19001-3788

September 16, 2010

Mr. Joe Martin  
Executive Director  
Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council  
225 Market Street, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Harrisburg, PA 17101

Dear Mr. Martin:

We received and reviewed the results of the PHC4 Hospital Performance Report-Outcome Data for Abington Memorial Hospital in Abington, PA. In retrospective review of the category "Miscellaneous Lung Surgery" we have reviewed the 13 deaths in that category for which we were characterized as having greater than expected mortality. Our findings indicate that each of these patients had multiple grave risk factors and collectively represent a group of extremely ill, predominantly elderly patients. In no case did death result from a complication of the procedure but was clearly the result of the patients underlying disease(s).

Of these 13 patients who died, seven patients had incurable metastatic cancers and four had severe pneumonia and/or end stage lung disease. Eight of these 13 patients underwent placement of vena cava filters for treatment/prophylaxis of pulmonary emboli; these filters were placed by interventional radiologists without any care by a surgeon. Three had end-stage lung disease and underwent thoracoscopic lung biopsies by our surgeons in the operating room to determine if therapy should be modified. One patient had an axillary node biopsy by a surgeon in the operating room to confirm metastatic melanoma as a guide to therapy. One patient with severe pneumonia underwent a bronchoscopy by a medical pulmonologist.

Only four of the thirteen patients underwent an operative procedure by a surgeon in an operating room. Only three of the 13 patients actually had "true" lung surgery as a physician or lay person might minimally define or understand lung surgery as the performance of a procedure that actually contacts a lung.

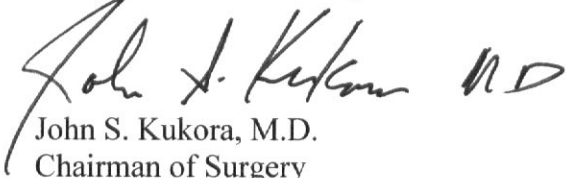
We are aware that the DRGs on which this outcomes report is based includes patients who have undergone a one or more of 73 extremely heterogeneous procedures that include major and minor procedures on lymphatic structures, veins, bone, arteries, liver, lung, nerve, and other organs. The procedures include neck, thoracic, abdominal, and extremity regions. In our opinion it is unfortunate that the data analysis characterizes these diverse procedures as "Miscellaneous Lung Surgery" as this may be misleading to the lay public.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the information included in the state's report and to demonstrate our ongoing commitment, as a tertiary care center, to treat the area's most severely ill patients.

Sincerely,



John J. Kelly, M.D.  
Chief of Staff/Chief Patient Safety Officer  
Abington Memorial Hospital



John S. Kukora, M.D.  
Chairman of Surgery  
Abington Memorial Hospital