

**Medical Staff/Medical Education**

May 4, 2007

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

Dear Mr. Volavka

Altoona Regional Health System appreciates the opportunity to respond to our data published by the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council relating to our Open Heart Program.


In addition to constantly monitoring all the care we provide to our patients to improve outcomes and patient safety, all cases of less than optimal outcome are reviewed very carefully to assure we are providing the highest quality of care.

The patients that did not fair well in the current reporting period had many complicating factors including very advanced age, end stage heart disease whose only remaining option was surgery, and emergent cases performed during an acute life threatening event. Many of these patients had pre-existing multi-organ disease compounding their acute cardiac care. Patient and family directives frequently limited the amount of support we could provide.

Our Open Heart Team at Altoona Regional has not had any significant changes since it's inception in September of 1989. Their primary goal of providing excellent care to our patients has not wavered. This team has remained on the forefront of every new surgical technique that is available to patients

Our Open Heart Team has been and continues to remain committed to providing the highest degree of surgical care to the patients of our community.

Sincerely yours,



David L. Cowger, M.D.  
Senior Vice President, Quality/Medical affairs  
Chief Medical Officer  
Altoona Regional Health System

DLC/bac