

June 12, 2014

Merry Holliday-Hanson, Ph.D., Manager  
Administrative Data Program  
Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development  
400 R Street, Room 250  
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Dr. Holliday-Hanson:

In response to the OSHPD report on “Hospital Inpatient Mortality Indicators for California, 2012,” we at Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital appreciate the opportunity to provide information to patients and our community about the quality of care we deliver.

As health professionals committed to transparency and continuous improvement, we welcome the release of quality data as a tool to help us identify opportunities to continually improve patients’ care.

The OSHPD data shows that Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital had worse than expected mortality rates for patients with Heart Failure during the calendar year 2012. Of the 294 individuals we treated for heart failure in 2012, an in-depth clinical review of the 17 who died in the hospital provides important context about the complexity of their conditions that is not reflected in the data:

- All 17 (100 %) were admitted to the hospital on an emergency basis.
- Fifteen of the 17 patients (88 %) had Do Not Resuscitate (DNR) orders, and chose not to receive life-prolonging interventions.
- It is similarly noteworthy that 12 of the 17 (59 %) elected to receive palliative care rather than a more aggressive course of life-sustaining treatment.
- Seven of the 17 died, as a natural course of their conditions, within 48 hours of admission.
- The majority of individuals who died – 97 % – were admitted with major to severe risk of mortality, most suffering from end-stage disease and multiple underlying illnesses.

Santa Rosa Memorial Hospital serves as the regional referral center for a population approaching one million people and 14 referring hospitals. As such, we are the leading provider for the most advanced heart failure patients in our region.

We are proud of the advances we’ve achieved in cardiovascular care – one of the primary areas of multi-disciplinary expertise that sets us apart as a regional referral center. In the years since 2012, we have built on these strengths for the betterment of heart failure patients, as evidenced by:

- **Our acceptance of the region's most complicated heart failure patients**, who are frequently transferred to us by smaller or competing hospitals.
- **Our readmission rates for heart failure, which are in the top quartile in the nation**, according to the Center for Medical and Medicaid Services (CMS). This success in lowering heart failure readmissions also places us among the best hospitals in the St. Joseph Health system.
- **The growth of our Case Management team's longstanding partnership with Sonoma State University nursing students on a Heart Failure Care Transitions program**, which links patients across the continuum of care and ensures timely follow-up after they leave the hospital.
- **The consistent referral of heart failure patients to this Care Transitions program**. Today, every patient admitted for heart failure is referred to the program, to help them manage their disease.
- **The expansion of our Palliative Care and Hospice services**, both on an inpatient and outpatient basis. Given the fact that we treat so many end-stage heart failure patients who are approaching the end of life, we increasingly seek to educate and empower patients and their families about their options along the continuum of care.
- **Our ongoing collaboration with skilled nursing facilities** throughout Sonoma County, to link our care coordination efforts for patients with heart failure and other conditions.

As our population ages, we are committed to providing the region's finest cardiovascular care. Thank you for allowing us to provide feedback about our heart failure programs.

Sincerely,



Todd Salnas, President



Richard Carvolth, MD, Chief Medical Officer

