

The Associated Press State & Local Wire

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HEADLINE: Study: Hospital mortalities down, readmissions up

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BODY:

Overall mortality rates for 26 conditions dropped at Pennsylvania hospitals during a recent one-year period, while readmission rates rose for 19 conditions, according to a new report released Wednesday.

The mortality rate for the 26 conditions dropped from 4.3 percent in 2002 to 4.1 percent in 2003, and no single condition showed a significant increase in mortality rate, according to the Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council, an independent state agency that analyzes the finances and quality of hospitals.

"Those differences are statistically significant," council spokesman Joe Martin said. "It's a meaningful decline, as far as we're concerned."

People who have heart attacks, but treat them with medication instead of surgery or angioplasty, recorded the largest drop in mortality rate for a single condition, from 14.4 percent to 13.5 percent.

Changes in overall mortality rate from 2001 to 2002 was largely static, the council reported.

The council studied the yearlong period ending Sept. 30. Conditions studied included abnormal heartbeats, congestive heart failure, diabetes, kidney failure, pneumonia and stroke.

Overall readmission rates for 19 different conditions treated in Pennsylvania hospitals rose from 18.1 percent in 2002 to 18.4 percent in 2003.

Patients spent more than 98,000 extra days in the hospital because of readmissions due to complications or infections, resulting in additional charges of \$530 million. Patients suffering from hemorrhagic strokes were the most likely to be readmitted for complications or infections at 7.5 percent, the council said.

In 2002, patients treated for 18 different conditions spent a total of more than 93,000 extra days in the hospital because of complications or infections, resulting in additional charges of \$410 million.

The latest report varied slightly from the previous year's in the number of hospitals studied and the number and type of conditions studied.

On the Net:

Pennsylvania Health Care Cost Containment Council:
<http://www.phc4.org>

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