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This letter is in reference to the VHI "2019 Cardiac Care Mortality Report" for Sentara Halifax Regional Hospital (SHRH). Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on this report.

The data regarding SHRH were carefully examined and all the mortality cases in the areas of medical cardiology, heart failure, percutaneous coronary intervention, and cardiac catheterization were reviewed. The mortality rates were as expected within all the areas with the exception of medical cardiology. Based on our review of all the mortality cases, I would like to note the following:

1. Statistically speaking, the medical cardiology mortality data are inconclusive due to the small sample size.
2. The methodology used in the VHI report to determine the "expected mortality" and the "mortality index" may not have accurately captured the severity of illness of the patients. The majority of these mortality cases had a very high severity index with multiple comorbidities and multi-organ disease.
3. The adjusted mortality based on the severity of illness is directly dependent on the methodology used. I believe the study model did not account for all the variables that significantly increased the severity index of the patients.
4. Out of the nine cases:
  - Two patients had "out of hospital" cardiac arrests with advanced life support by EMS in progress upon arrival to the hospital.
  - Two patients had metastatic cancer with additional severe cardiac complications prior to arrival.
  - One 84 year old patient had severe respiratory problems and a complicated cardiac history.
  - One 89 year old patient had an acute heart attack and shock.
  - One patient had an acute heart attack, refused medical treatment, and requested hospice care.
  - One patient had end stage kidney disease and other complications.
  - One patient had end stage kidney disease and a complicated cardiac history including inoperable coronary artery disease.

Quality of care remains the highest priority for our institution. Our team regularly reviews every single complication and/or mortality.

Thank you, again, for the opportunity to share our insights and comments on the VHI "2019 Cardiac Care Mortality Report" for SHRH.

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