**DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

**National Center for Health Statistics**
**3311 Toledo Road**
**Hyattsville, Maryland 20782**

Dear

We would like to request your participation in a pretest being conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), to redesign the National Hospital Discharge Survey (NHDS). Since 1965, the NHDS has been a primary source of information on the nation's inpatient use in short-stay, non-federal hospitals. A redesign of the NHDS allows us to improve data to inform current and future policy and research issues. The NCHS has contracted with Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International, a non-profit research organization, to assist in this task. More information about RTI can be found at www.rti.org. We hope to gain insight into any problems involving our proposed data collection tools and procedures, so that we can improve them in the final survey. Your participation in the pretest is voluntary. There are no penalties for refusing.

We plan to collect protected health information (PHI) for sampled discharges so that we can link to birth and death records in the future. The inclusion of PHI in the pretest will allow us to better understand the issues and problems related to their collection. PHI for this study includes name, address, ZIP Code, the last 4 digits of patient's social security number, medical record number, Medicare health insurance benefit/claim number, and dates of admission, birth, discharge, and procedures. This information will be used only to evaluate field methods and procedures for the pretest, and will not be published in any manner. Be assured that there are several ways that the Privacy Rule (as mandated by the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act [HIPAA]) allows you to participate. In particular, disclosures of patient data are permitted for public health purposes and for research that has been approved by a CDC Institutional Review Board (IRB) – both of which apply to this study. The IRBs at CDC's NCHS and RTI have reviewed and approved all aspects of this study. Included in the enclosures is a document called "Frequently Asked Questions", which covers a broad range of issues. Please note, in particular, the detailed section on confidentiality and use of data.

Please be assured that we are required by law to keep all data regarding patients and facilities strictly confidential and to use these data only for statistical purposes as stated by Section 308(d) of the Public Health Service Act [42 United States Code 242m (d)] and the Confidential Information Protection and Statistical Efficiency Act (PL-107-347). Published documents resulting from this pretest will not include any patient or clinical data.

In several days, a representative from RTI will telephone you to arrange for an appointment to discuss the possibility of your hospital's participation in this pretest. If you have questions, please feel free to call RTI staff, Dr. John Loft at (312) 456-5241 or Ms. Sharon Campolucci at (770) 407-4905. Dr. Carol DeFrances, Team Leader of the Hospital Care Team at NCHS, may be contacted at (301) 458-4440.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Sondik, Ph.D.
Director, National Center for Health Statistics
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Enclosures