

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

DATA ISSUES BRIEF

AUGUST 2008

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VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

1. **FY09 DSS Technical Conversion Guidelines: Information about LOINC Codes for LAR NDE**

The Fiscal Year 2009 (FY09) Decision Support System (DSS) Technical Conversion Guidelines are now on the VA DSS VA Intranet Web site (address given in the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*). These guidelines include more information about the new Logical Observation Identifiers Names and Codes (LOINC) which are universal identifiers for laboratory and other clinical observations that will now be used to pull DSS Lab Results (LAR) National Data Extract (NDE) records (<http://LOINC.org/>). These codes will address the specimen source problem documented on the VIREC Web site <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/dataSourcesCategory/DataQuality/Lab.htm>, as well as provide uniformity for identifying laboratory and clinical observations across different VA facilities.

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2. **FY09 DSS Technical Conversion Guidelines: 5 NEW Test Results in LAR NDE**

The FY09 DSS guidelines document five new test results that will be included in the LAR NDE: Phosphate (Serum), Carcinoembryonic Antigen (CEA) (Serum), Pro B Natriuretic Peptide, Phosphate Pre-Dialysis (Serum), and Phosphate Post-Dialysis (Serum). More information can be found on the DSS VA Intranet Web site (address given in the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

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3. FY09 DSS Technical Conversion Guidelines: DSS Identifier (Clinic Stop Code) Changes

In FY09, DSS will institute several changes to its list of DSS Identifiers, also referred to as clinic stop codes. These changes include 13 new codes as well as inactivation of 7 identifiers and some credit pair changes (a credit pair is a combination of primary and secondary clinic stop codes). DSS Identifier updates also include enhanced definitions of 68 existing identifiers. Because these changes affect what outpatient workload can be captured with what codes, they are of particular importance for studies needing to identify particular services provided. Note that DSS Identifiers are also used in the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) and are included in the Medical SAS (MedSAS) Outpatient Datasets. For more information about DSS Identifiers and how they are used in the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), see the *DSS Identifiers – Instructional Guide* posted on the DSS VA Intranet Web site (address given in the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*). Complete detailed changes and code definitions are also posted on this Web page (see References A and B).

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4. VA/VHA Innovation Program Sets Up Innovation ListServ

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Chief Health Informatics Office and the VA Office of Information and Technology (OI&T), under the VA/VHA Innovation Program, have set up an innovation listserv. Interested subscribers should send an email with “Subscribe Innovators-L” in the message body of the email to the listserv email address (email address given in the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*). For more information about the Innovation Program, researchers can go to the PowerPoint slides from the 2008 VHA Electronic Health University (VeHU) presentation posted on the VA Intranet (address given in the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

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5. VSSC Launches a New Help Desk

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Support Service Center (VSSC) launched a new Help Desk on Friday August 1, 2008. The new Help Desk has been customized so requests can be easily directed to the most knowledgeable VSSC staff. For information about setting up a Help Desk account, entering a Help Desk question, and monitoring the VSSC’s response, a PowerPoint tour is available (address given in the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*) or researchers can go to the VSSC VA Intranet Web site (address given in the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

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EDUCATION:

6. Free Web Conference Series on Clinical Decision Support

The National Resource Center for Health Information Technology of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) will be hosting a series of four, free 90-minute Web conferences focusing on how clinical decision support can inform and improve the delivery of health care. These conferences will begin September 19, 2008 and continue over the next few months. The first conference on September 19, “Using Clinical Decision Support to Make Informed Patient Care Decisions,” will take place from 3:30 to 5:00 pm EDT. Presenters will include Drs. White (AHRQ), Middleton (Brigham and Women’s Hospital) and Shiffman (Yale). For more information and registration, go to <https://nrc.webex.com/mw03051/mywebex/default>

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CONFERENCES:

7. AHRQ 2008 Annual Conference September 7-10

AHRQ is holding its 2008 Annual Conference, “Promoting Quality – Partnering for Change,” on September 7-10, 2008 in Bethesda MD. The conference will feature sessions by leading national experts on comparative effectiveness research, patient safety, health information technology and more. Registration is required for the conference, but the conference is free. For more information and registration, go to <http://www.ahrq.gov/about/ahrqconf08.htm>.

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- **Data Issues Brief:** is a monthly newsletter published by the [VA Information Resource Center \(VIREC\)](#) for the purpose of informing and updating VA researchers on current and pending happenings and changes regarding health data, databases, and medical informatics.
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