



# Pharmacy Benefits Management- Medical Advisory Panel E<sub>z</sub>-Minutes

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## Inside this issue:

### Rofecoxib Removed

July-Sept 04 National PBM Reviews Postings  
Criteria for Use; Treatment Guidelines  
Drug Class Reviews  
Drug Monographs  
FAQ  
Safety Reports-NEW  
Therapeutic Interchange Guidance  
Apomorphine Distribution  
New Molecular Entities  
Question from the Field  
PBM Projects in Progress

### Nefazodone and Hepatotoxicity

NDF Drug-Drug Interaction  
CE Program-Treatment of Dyslipidemia in the High Risk Patient  
VAMedSAFE

### Look Alike-Sound Alike

Gold, Silver, Bronze Medals for PBM-MAP Educational On-line Survey

## Rofecoxib Removed from Market

On September 30<sup>th</sup>, the manufacturer of rofecoxib (Vioxx®) issued a press release announcing the immediate voluntary withdrawal of their product from worldwide markets based upon data from a three-year, randomized, prospective, placebo-controlled clinical trial called APPROVe (Adenomatous Polyp Prevention on VIOXX). In the APPROVe trial, 2,600 patients with a history of colorectal adenomas were enrolled and randomized to rofecoxib 25 mg or placebo for 3 years. Although the exact rate or number of cardiovascular events (e.g. heart attack and stroke) has not been made available, patients randomized to rofecoxib are reported to have experienced an increased relative risk for cardiovascular events compared to those on placebo. The increased rate of these types of events was observed after 18 months of treatment with rofecoxib. As a result, effective immediately, VA will discontinue all prescribing and dispensing of VIOXX.

Please note: at this time, there are no data suggesting that other available COX-2 selective agents have a similar risk for cardiovascular events.

PBM-MAP has written several documents related to this topic including information for providers in the VA on other treatment options, titled "Rofecoxib Guidance." In addition, documents titled "FAQ Physicians", "Dear Healthcare Professional", "Physician Notification Letter", and "Pharmacist Notification" are available to learn more details. Be sure to check out the patient letter template for use by the VISN and/or facility level clinical staff. It can be modified to communicate to patients the need to contact their provider. Sites are requested to send each patient a letter and include a phone number for patients to contact the Pharmacy Service with questions. These documents and more are available at the following web site: <http://vaww.pbm.med.va.gov/pbm/vioxx.htm>

Please advise patients to return any portion(s) of the unused medication to the VA Pharmacy Service the next time they visit the VA.

## **HURRY and SUBSCRIBE!**

Can't wait to read breaking news inside the PBM-MAP E<sub>z</sub>-Minutes? Then, subscribe to receive free reminders when the new edition of E<sub>z</sub>-Minutes is hot off the press. To subscribe, send an email to [subscribe@verdict.uthscsa.edu](mailto:subscribe@verdict.uthscsa.edu) with "subscribe to E<sub>z</sub>-Minutes" in the subject field. If you have any problems with these instructions, send an email to [cara.goff@med.va.gov](mailto:cara.goff@med.va.gov) with "subscribe to E<sub>z</sub>-Minutes" in the subject line.

## **Recent National PBM Reviews Postings on Web Site**

### **Criteria for Use**

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/criteria.htm>

Linezolid, quinupristin-dalfopristin and daptomycin  
Biologics in Psoriasis  
Fondaparinux  
High dose vitamin supplementation for AMD  
Gabapentin

### **Criteria for Nonformulary Use**

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/criteria.htm>

### **Treatment Guidelines**

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/treatment.htm>

### **Drug Class Reviews**

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/reviews.htm>

Angiotensin II Receptor Antagonists

## **Drug Monographs**

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/drugmonograph.htm>

Miglustat (Zavesca<sup>®</sup>)  
Fondaparinux (Arixtra<sup>®</sup>) Addendum  
Eplerenone (Inspra<sup>™</sup>)  
Olanzapine IM (Zyprexa IM<sup>®</sup>)

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/faq.htm>

Reversal and Prove-It Trials

## **Safety Reports—NEW!**

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/safety.htm>

Statin-fibrate

## **Therapeutic Interchange Guidance**

(Formerly Patient and/or Provider Information Letters)

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/tig.htm>

## **Apomorphine (Apokyn<sup>®</sup>) Distribution**

Apomorphine is a direct-acting dopamine agonist with strong D<sub>1</sub> and D<sub>2</sub> dopamine receptor stimulating properties. Apomorphine is approved for the treatment of acute, intermittent hypomobility, “off” episodes (end-of-dose wearing off and unpredictable “on/off” episodes) associated with advanced Parkinson’s Disease. Because of the unique nature of this agent and its place in therapy, a procedure for distribution has been developed and soon will be posted on the PBM web page. Please click on the following address to locate the document and learn more details.

<http://www.vapbm.org/PBM/menu.asp>

## **New Molecular Entities Review**

- **Miglustat (Zavesca<sup>®</sup>)**-Not added to VA National Formulary (VANF) or VISN Formularies
- **Oxaliplatin<sup>®</sup> Update**-Added to VANF and VISN Formularies
- **Bevacizumab (Avastin<sup>®</sup>)**-Not added to VANF and VISN Formularies
- **Eplerenone (Inspra<sup>™</sup>)**-Not added to VANF or VISN Formularies
- **Fondaparinux (Arixtra<sup>®</sup>)** -Not added to VANF but allow VISNs to add.
- **Apomorphine ( Apokyn<sup>®</sup>)**-Added to VANF restricted to Neurology Services
- **Cincalet (Sensipar<sup>®</sup>)** -Not added to VANF or VISN Formularies
- **Olanzapine IM (Zyprexa IM<sup>®</sup>)**-Added to the VANF, restricted to criteria

**QUESTION FROM THE FIELD:** *“How are the PBM-MAP, VA-DoD criteria for use and treatment guidelines disseminated to front-line physician providers? Are they sent to the Chief Medical Officers in each VISN and then they are responsible for distribution through Chiefs of Staff?”*

**ANSWER:** Criteria for use developed by the VA PBM-MAP are disseminated to the field in the following manner: Notification is sent to the VA Medical Advisory Panel, VISN Formulary Leaders, and VA Clinical Pharmacists that the final document has been posted on the PBM intERnet and intRAnet Web sites ([www.vapbm.org](http://www.vapbm.org) and <http://vaww.pbm.med.va.gov>). A request is made that the notification be forwarded to interested individuals. Please note, documents will usually be posted 2 weeks post meeting in order to finalize the minutes. The opportunity to comment on draft documents occur when they are forwarded to the field through the VISN Formulary Leaders, Pharmacy Chiefs, CMOP Directors, and Chief Medical Officers.

The VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) are disseminated through the Office of Quality and Performance with notification to the Chief Medical Officers and Quality Medical Officers in the VISN and to Nursing. Facility Directors, Chiefs of Staff, and VISN Directors are notified of completion of the CPGs through the Publications Office. At the culmination of the concurrence process, there is a letter that is signed by the USH which announces the guidelines and directs people to the Office of Quality and Performance Web site [www.oqp.med.va.gov](http://www.oqp.med.va.gov) where the documents are posted.

Thanks for your question Christine!

### **PBM Projects in Progress:**

Combination therapy for prostatism

### **Criteria for Use:**

clopidogrel/ASA in CABG/PVD  
cinacalcet

### **Drug Class Review:**

Sedative Hypnotics

### **Drug Monographs:**

cilostazol  
duloxetine

## Nefazodone and Hepatotoxicity

On June 14, 2004, Bristol-Meyers-Squibb ceased distribution of nefazodone (Serzone).<sup>1</sup> Nefazodone was removed from the market in the United Kingdom and Canada in 2003 due to its association with severe hepatotoxicity. Public Citizen filed suit against the FDA to force the withdrawal of nefazodone in the U.S. in March 2004. Nefazodone is still available from generic manufacturers.

The PBM-Medical Advisory Panel (MAP) addressed the question of whether nefazodone should remain on the VA National Formulary. Since 2000, the number of patients in the VA taking nefazodone has decreased 71% and the number of patients started on nefazodone has declined 94%. Below is a summary of the data: First, nefazodone's labeling requires inclusion of a black box warning with the following information.<sup>2</sup>

- The reported rate of hepatic failure in the U.S. is ~1 case resulting in death or transplant per 250,000 – 300,000 patient-years of treatment. This is ~3 – 4 times the estimated background rate of liver failure.
- There is no evidence that the use of nefazodone by patients with pre-existing liver disease increases their probability of developing liver failure, although it does complicate monitoring.
- The time to liver injury for the reported cases resulting in death or transplant ranged from 2 weeks to 6 months after nefazodone initiation.
- Periodic liver function tests (LFTs) have not been proven to prevent serious injury, although baseline transaminases are recommended.
- Patients presenting with clinical signs or symptoms of liver dysfunction should have their liver transaminases measured. Patients whose ALT or AST values are increased 3 times the upper limit of normal should have nefazodone stopped and considered to be at increased risk for liver injury should it be restarted.

Second, data from the Spanish Pharmacovigilance System found the estimated incidence of hepatotoxicity to be 29 cases compared to 1.3 – 2.6 cases per 100,000 patient-years associated with nefazodone and serotonin reuptake inhibitors respectively.<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, the WHO's analysis of its spontaneous case reports of suspected adverse reactions found that hepatic injury, attributed to nefazodone, occurred in a statistically significant unexpected number of reports; the only antidepressant to do so.<sup>4</sup> The other antidepressants included were citalopram, fluoxetine, fluvoxamine, paroxetine, sertraline and venlafaxine.

Lastly, a review of the case reports appearing in the literature suggests the following:

- There is no clear dose-hepatotoxic relationship as the dose

of nefazodone ranged from 100 mg to 600 mg per day.

- Women may be at greater risk since 31 of the 41 cases (76%) were in women; including 68.8% of 32 cases reported in one series from Canada.<sup>5</sup> However, these crude numbers are not adjusted for exposure by gender.
- Patients of all ages are vulnerable since cases have ranged in age from 16 to 73 years of age.
- The time frame from the start of nefazodone to the onset of symptoms ranged from 10 days to 2 years. The Canadian series found that 88% of 32 cases occurred within 6 months.
- Universal initial patient symptoms included fatigue and jaundice.<sup>5</sup> Nausea and/or vomiting, abdominal tenderness, decreased appetite, arthralgias, pruritis, dark urine, and clay-like stools were reported in some cases.
- Liver enzymes, including alkaline phosphatase, were routinely elevated.

### Summary:

There are no set guidelines as to when or how frequently to monitor LFTs in patients taking nefazodone. It is recommended that baseline LFTs tests be performed and that they be repeated regularly in the first 6 months of treatment and then every 6 months thereafter.<sup>6</sup> Patients should also be educated and reminded regularly of the signs and symptoms of hepatotoxicity such as fatigue, nausea, vomiting, and jaundice. Nefazodone should be discontinued if there is any suspicion of hepatotoxicity.

### Conclusion:

Concerned that patients who are refractory to other antidepressants would not have nefazodone as an option, the low incidence of hepatotoxicity, and the already declining use (particularly new patients), the MAP voted to keep nefazodone on the VA National Formulary.

Submitted by Todd Semla, MS, PharmD, BCPS, FCCP

1. The Pink Sheet. May 24, 2004.
2. Serzone (nefazodone) package insert, 2004.
3. Garcia-Pando AC, de Ipozo JG, Sanchez AS, et al. Hepatotoxicity associated with the new antidepressants. *J Clin Psychiatry* 2002; 63:135-7.
4. Spigset O, Hagg S, Bate A. Hepatic injury and pancreatitis during treatment with serotonin reuptake inhibitors: data from the World Health Organization (WHO) database of adverse drug effects. *Int Clin Psychopharmacology* 2003; 18:157-161.
5. Stewart DE. Hepatic adverse reactions associated with nefazodone. *Can J Psychiatry* 2002; 47:375-377.
6. Lucena MI, Carvajal A, Andrade RJ, et al. Antidepressant-induced hepatotoxicity. *Expert Opin Drug Safety* 2003; 2(3): 249-62.

## National Drug File (NDF) Guidelines for Drug-Drug Interaction Entry:

Please refer to a previous issue of the EZ-Minutes <http://www.vapbm.org/ezminutes/Ez-MinutesVol2Iss1Jan-March04.pdf> for a more detailed article describing the NDF guidelines. Below is a list of the current interactions that have been added to the NDF since 8-1-04. Interactions to be discussed in the near future include erythromycin, cinacalcet, and apomorphine. To learn more about the NDF drug-drug interactions, be sure to click on the following link: <http://vapbm.org/natform/National%20Drug%20File%20Support%20Group.pdf>

INGREDIENT 1	INGREDIENT 2	SEVERITY	INGREDIENT 1	INGREDIENT 2	SEVERITY
aspirin	methotrexate	critical	almotriptan	ketoconazole	significant
amiodarone	indinavir	critical	almotriptan	itraconazole	significant
amiodarone	atazanavir	critical	eletriptan	ketoconazole	significant
amiodarone	ritonavir	critical	eletriptan	itraconazole	significant
amiodarone	saquinavir	critical	ethinyl estradiol	secobarbital	significant
cranberry juice	warfarin	critical	butabarbital	ethinyl estradiol	significant
alatrofloxacin	mesoridazine	critical	ethinyl estradiol	primidone	significant
atazanavir	rifapentine	critical	ethinyl estradiol	mephobarbital	significant
atazanavir	tenofovir	critical	amobarbital	ethinyl estradiol	significant
digitalis	rabeprazole	critical	estradiol	phenobarbital	significant
eplerenone	erythromycin	critical	estradiol	secobarbital	significant
eplerenone	nelfinavir	critical	butabarbital	estradiol	significant
eplerenone	saquinavir	critical	estradiol	primidone	significant
eplerenone	verapamil	critical	estradiol	mephobarbital	significant
ergotamine	fosamprenavir	critical	amobarbital	estradiol	significant
oxandrolone	warfarin	critical	cimetidine	quinidine	significant
			doxazosin	sildenafil	significant
			fluvastatin	nelfinavir	significant
			fluvoxamine	warfarin	significant
			irinotecan	phenytoin	significant
			phenelzine	tryptophan	significant
			prazosin	sildenafil	significant
			propoxyphene	ritonavir	significant
			sildenafil	tamsulosin	significant
			sildenafil	terazosin	significant
			sulfamethoxazole	warfarin	significant
			terazosin	varidenafil	significant
			tranlycypromine	tryptophan	significant

### "Treatment of Dyslipidemia in the High Risk Patient"

Many thanks to Cathy Kelley, Pharm. D, C. Bernie Good, MD, MPH, FACP and Rick Downs, MD, FACP for their outstanding job as the presenting faculty. The remaining rebroadcast dates of the program (all ET and on VAKN Channel 1) are Oct. 14<sup>th</sup>, 3PM; and Oct. 18<sup>th</sup>, 12 noon. Continuing education credit for ACCME, ANCC and ACPE is available for viewing the initial broadcast, rebroadcast programs or a tape of the broadcast until November 18, 2004. As a reminder, a post-test is required to receive pharmacy continuing education. Ask your respective site teleconference coordinator (see web site) <http://vaww.lrn.va.gov/satcoord/default.asp> for the sign-in sheet, course form evaluation and post-test. If any problems or have further questions, please contact Rick Lussier at [Richard.Lussier@lrn.va.gov](mailto:Richard.Lussier@lrn.va.gov).

### VAMedSAFE

The following programs are still available for your immediate viewing. Check it out!

- "How to Enter an Allergy or Adverse Drug Event (ADE)."

<http://www.vapbm.org/vamedsafe/How%20To%20Enter%20an%20Allergy%20or%20Adverse%20Drug%20.ppt>

- "ADR Frequently Asked Questions"

<http://vapbm.org/vamedsafe/Adverse%20Drug%20Reaction.pdf>

- VHA's Adverse Drug Event Reporting Program

<http://vapbm.org/Reporting%20Program.pdf>

***Evaluation and Validation of Look Alike and Sound Alike Medication Error within the VA System Using Computerized Prescription Data: A Pilot Project***  
***By: Marie Sales, Pharm.D.***

**PURPOSE:** A pilot project was conducted based on concerns expressed from the field regarding medication errors that have occurred in ordering prescriptions for certain agents with similar drug names. The data represented in this pilot project are based on prescription data only. This does not confirm administration or patient receipt of the drug(s).

**OBJECTIVES:** The objectives of this pilot project were:

1. To evaluate and compare the number and percent of look alike (LA) and sound alike (SA) medication errors using the following pairs of agents with orthographic and phonetic similarities in names:
  - A) Oxycontin and Oxybutynin
  - B) Quinine and Quinidine
  - C) Hydralazine and Hydroxyzine
  - D) Hydrochlorothiazide (HCTZ) and HCTZ/Triamterene
  - E) Simvastatin and Simethicone
2. To compare LA and SA medication errors in regards to switching patterns to determine:
  - "Potential" error
  - "Real" error
3. To examine diagnosis codes in patients receiving the selected LA and SA drug pairs using automated ICD-9 codes and perform limited medical chart review at sites to validate/verify true indication for receiving these agents.

**METHODS:** A retrospective national database review was conducted using the Pharmacy Benefits Management version 3.0 prescription database (PBMv3.0) to examine drug utilization. Veterans receiving oxycontin, oxybutynin, quinidine, quinine, hydralazine, hydroxyzine, HCTZ, HCTZ/triamterene, simvastatin, and simethicone were included. The following were evaluated: new prescriptions of the aforementioned agents (index dates October 1, 2001 – September 30, 2003); drug switching patterns from one agent to its respective LA and SA pair after the

start of the new prescription; number and percent correct versus incorrect users (medication errors); and number and percent "potential" error compared to "real" error based on switching patterns.

Data for patients in the "potential error" group and the "real error" group for each drug pair determined using the above methods were used in merging with ICD-9 codes from the Austin Automation Center (AAC) to assess actual incorrect use, correct use, and unconfirmed error. As limitations occur in using automated diagnoses codes (i.e., lack of problem list and medical history information), a limited medical chart review at selected sites was carried out to confirm true incorrect use compared to correct use as ascertained by merging of the databases.

**RESULTS:** Preliminary results from the pilot database review show correct use ranging from 91.8%-99.9% for the aforementioned LA/SA drug pairs. Out of the small percentage of incorrect use, potential error occurred within a range of .1%-5.5% among the drug pairs; and real error occurred within a range of .03%-.97% among the drug pairs. Using the "potential" error and "real" error results from the initial database review, a validation was performed by merging with automated ICD-9 codes. These results identified that the most incorrect use occurred with the Simvastatin/Simethicone pair (approx 70-80%) and the least incorrect use occurred with Quinidine/Quinine pair (approx 0%-37.5%). See Figures 1-4 on page 6. The limited chart review occurred at 2 sites and used a small sample of patients. This uncovered actual correct use in patients categorized in the "potential" error and "real" error groups. Full chart review of all patients identified at the sites continues in order to complete the validation.

**SUMMARY:** Results from this project will provide insight into the extent of LA/SA medication errors within the VA system. The project will assist in the development of a tool that can evaluate system-wide medication errors of LA/SA origin. Information from this project may possibly assist in meeting the JCAHO requirements for patient safety with respect to evaluating the percentage of medication errors.

**Figures 1-4. (SEE PAGE 6) Percent Incorrect vs. Percent Correct Use Confirmed in Real Error and Potential Error Groups Detected from Pilot Database Review\*.**

Preliminary results from the pilot database review showed incorrect use ranging from 0.1% - 8.2% among the drug pairs. This incorrect use was further broken down into "Real Error" and "Potential Error". "Real Error" is defined by a drug switching pattern of ABA and "Potential Error" is defined by an AB switching pattern without reverting to A. "A" represents the intended or correct drug and "B" represents the LA/SA counterpart possibly prescribed in error for "A". Patient data from the "potential error" and "real error" groups determined from the pilot database review were merged with automated ICD-9 codes to validate error rate. Validation consisted of identifying use as "Incorrect Use" (error confirmed by diagnosis code), "Unconfirmed Error" (absence of a diagnosis code related to use of drug A or B), and "Correct Use" (presence of diagnosis code that correlates with use of agent A or B). N=number of patients in each error group detected by pilot database review. Full chart review of all patients continues in order to complete the validation as limitations occur with using computerized ICD-9 codes (i.e., lack of problem list or medical history information).

**\*THESE DATA REPRESENT PRESCRIPTION DATA ONLY. THIS DOES NOT CONFIRM ADMINISTRATION OR PATIENT RECEIPT OF DRUG.**

Figure 1.

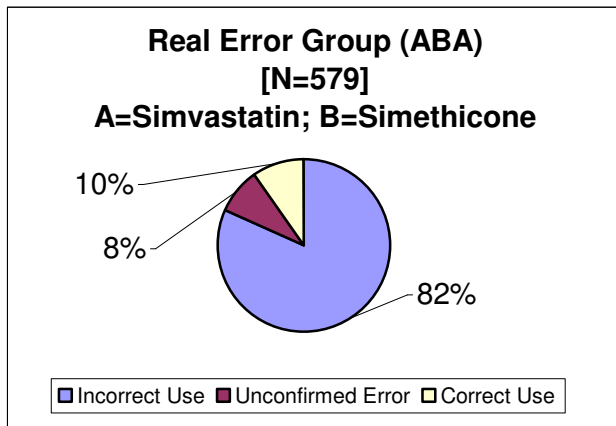


Figure 2.

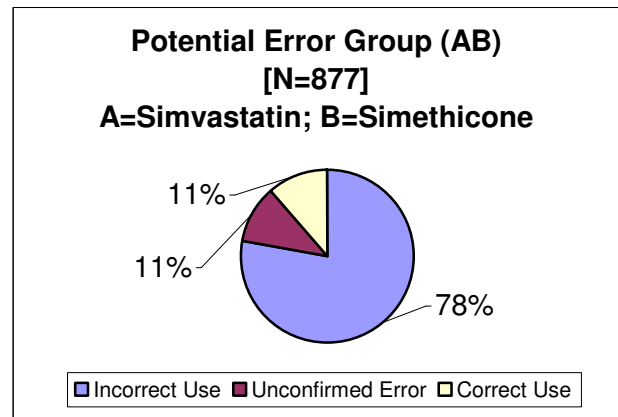


Figure 3.

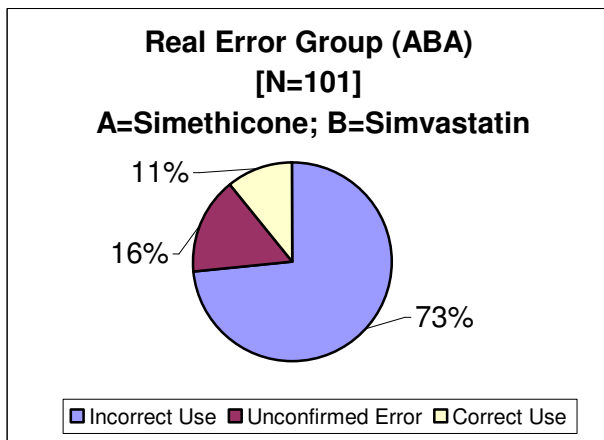
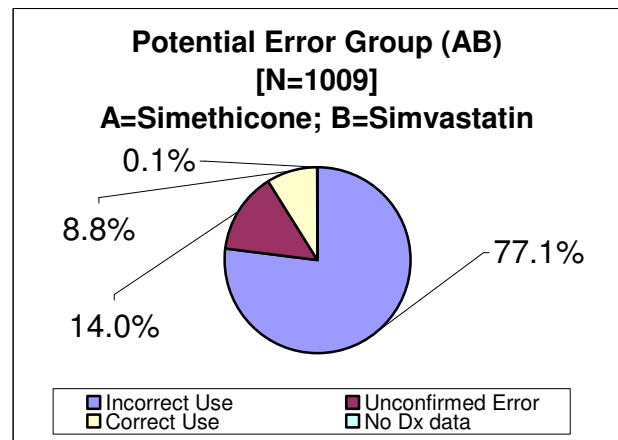


Figure 4.



The results of the PBM-MAP on-line Education Survey are in! READ ON!



Even though the Olympics were recently finished in Greece, that same spirit of competition was still fresh in everyone's mind and very much alive at the recent PBM-MAP joint meeting held in Chicago during October 16<sup>th</sup> - 18<sup>th</sup>. Olympic medals (minus the laurels) were awarded at the meeting to the 3 top VISNs completing the most survey. Congratulations to VISN 6 for completing the most survey. Present at the meeting was Steve Coombs, RPh to accept the gold medal. A close second was VISN 12 with Ken Siehr, RPh, MPA accepting the silver medal. The bronze medal was awarded to VISN 7 with Joette S. Lowe, Pharm.D. present to accept the medal. Congratulations Winners! Of the topics available to choose from, the highest percentage of votes were for the following topics: various anemias (62%), DM (55%), CHF (49%) and COPD (42%). Of the topics that were written in, the top 3 choices were hepatitis C, PTSD, and HRT. Other topics included multiple times were drug-drug interaction, PVD, Alzheimers/dementia, and osteoporosis.

Thanks to all VISNs for their participation and input!

Do you have any additional questions, comments or want to submit an article to the next PBM-MAP E<sub>z</sub> - Minutes? Please e-mail: Editor: Janet Dailey, PharmD at vhapbh Dailey, JH OR Co-Editor: Pete Glassman, at [peter.glassman@med.va.gov](mailto:peter.glassman@med.va.gov).