

H E R C

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VA HEALTH ECONOMICS BULLETIN

Econometrics Course

Interested in using VA administrative data to answer burning epidemiological or health services research questions? There are many powerful econometric techniques available to researchers who wish to answer questions outside of randomized clinical trials. However, there are important pitfalls associated with each technique.

The purpose of this HERC course is to provide participants with sufficient background in econometrics to choose techniques suited both to their data and to their economic model. There will be a strong emphasis on applied work, illustrating the use of statistical software applied to VA data. Pre-requisites: basic statistics background including familiarity with multivariate analysis. The course is designed to be cumulative; people are strongly encouraged to attend all sessions. More information is available on our website, www.herc.research.med.va.gov.

Identifying Non-Veterans in VA Utilization Files

A small number of patients treated in the VA health care system are not veterans. These non-veterans include VA employees, family members of veterans, and others. VA researchers often wish to identify or eliminate non-veteran records from their analyses. In a new technical report, HERC staff members Samuel King, Andrea Shane, and Mark Smith provide a reliable method for identifying care given to non-veterans. Using FY04 PTF and OPC files, they find that non-veteran records account for 1.0% of inpatient records and 2.2% of outpatient records events. Among females alone, however, non-veterans account for 11.8% of inpatient records and 22.1% of outpatient records. The identification of non-veteran records is thus especially important in a study of the health care use of female veterans. The technical report on identifying non-veteran medical records is available on the HERC website: http://www.herc.research.med.va.gov/publications/technical_reports.asp

Upcoming HERC Cyber-seminars

October 25: Matt Maciejewski, Ph.D., and Steve Pizer, Ph.D.: Propensity scores and instrumental variables.

November and December: No seminars

HERC cyber-seminars are held at 2 p.m. Eastern/ 11 a.m. Pacific. Participants use WebEx software in order to view the presentations. For more information, see http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/default.cfm.

Recent Publications

Accuracy of Self Reported Health Care Utilization

Bhandari A, Wagner, TH.

Medical Care Research and Review 2006; 63(2), 217-235.

The authors systematically reviewed 42 studies assessing the accuracy of self-reported health care utilization. The paper provides researchers with information on when self-report is accurate and steps that can be taken during data collection to improve accuracy.

Staff Update

Mistry Gage, MPH joined HERC this past May as a Research Health Science Specialist. Concurrently she works for the Santa Clara County Department of Public Health as an Epidemiologist, analyzing the Bio-Terrorism Syndromic Surveillance System. With a passion for health disparities during graduate school Mistry studied bacterial vaginosis and racial/ethnic health disparities.

Research Assistant Sam Richardson left HERC in June to start a doctoral program in health policy at Harvard University.

Administrative Officer Sharon Abas left HERC in late August. We hope to hire a new AO in October.