

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

DATA ISSUES BRIEF

December 2008

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VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

1. VHA Office of Information Changes Its Name

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Office of Information has changed its name to Office of Health Information. The Office of Health Information provides more information about the name change, including an organizational chart and a list of office functions, on its intranet website at <http://vaww.va.gov/vhaoi/>.

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2. NDS Issues Data Alert for Obtaining Real SSN Data

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) National Data Systems (NDS) has posted a Data Alert notifying SAS analysts using the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC) IBM mainframe of a procedure name change for obtaining real SSN data. This change only affects mainframe users. The full announcement along with a User's Guide is available on the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) VA Intranet Website (managed by NDS) at <http://vaww.aac.va.gov/npcd/>.

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3. FY08 Diagnostic Cost Group Data Available at AITC

Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) Diagnostic Cost Group (DCG) data are now available at the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC). The file name is RMTPRD.MED.DCG.RISK.SMART22.FY08. The VHA Support Services Center (VSSC) has produced DCG risk scores (also known as Hierarchical Condition Category or HCC scores) beginning with FY98. Further information on DCG risk scores is available in the *December 2007 Data Issues Brief* at

<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/DataIssuesBrief/2007/DIB-0712er.pdf>. Researchers requiring more information can send questions to sophie.lo@va.gov.

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4. National Clinical Reminder Program

Researchers using, developing or evaluating clinical reminders may be interested in reading *VHA Directive 2008-084: National Clinical Reminder Program* (December 16, 2008), which establishes policy regarding national standardization of components of computerized clinical reminders.

Directive 2008-084 charges the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Chief Patient Care Services (PCS) Officer with establishing a National Clinical Reminders Committee and includes a charter for this committee in an attachment to the directive. The Chief Officer of the VHA Office of Information, now the Office of Health Information, is responsible for appointing a National Clinical Reminders Coordinator to oversee a network of enterprise level, facility-based, clinical application coordinators to develop national clinical reminders, national prototype clinical reminders, and standardized national electronic data components as health factors. Frequently asked questions (*Attachment B*) and further details are available in the full text of this directive at <http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1>.

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5. Means Test and Geographic-Based Means Test Thresholds for Calendar Year 2009

Researchers concerned with means test copay exemptions and means test copay requirements may want to consult *VHA Directive 2008-083: Means Test and Geographic-Based Means Test Thresholds for Calendar Year 2009* (December 16, 2008). This directive provides the Means Test Thresholds, Medicare Deductible Rate, and Child Income Exclusion for calendar year 2009. *Directive 2008-083* also provides an Internet link to the United States Housing and Urban Development's income limits for Fiscal Year 2008 (FY08) for use by the VHA in calendar year 2009. For full details, see

<http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1>.

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6. VA Collaborates with Department of Defense and Department of Labor in National Resource Directory

The new Web-based National Resource Directory launched by the Department of Defense (DoD) in collaboration with the Department of Labor and the VA may be of interest to researchers investigating issues in patient self-management. The directory provides a network of care resources for wounded and injured service members and veterans. Further information is available on the directory's website at <https://www.nationalresourcedirectory.org/nrd/public/DisplayPage.do?parentFolderId=6006>.

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EDUCATION

7. VIREC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Series

Anne Sales, MSN, PhD, RN, is presenting a cyber seminar on Tuesday, January 20, entitled “Optimizing Electronic Health Records for Nursing Care.” Dr. Sales is Associate Professor, Faculty of Nursing, University of Alberta and Canada Research Chair in Interdisciplinary Healthcare Teams and was previously a research scientist at the VA Puget Sound Health Care System in Seattle. Participants are welcome to join the cyber seminar on a “first come, first serve” basis. VIREC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminars take place on the third Tuesday of each month at 12 pm, ET. Further information on these seminars is available on VIREC’s VA Internet Website at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/EducationResources/Seminars/Clinical-Informatics.htm>. For questions, contact Joanne Stevens (joanne.stevens@va.gov), VIREC’s Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Coordinator.

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CONFERENCES

8. National Health Policy Conference February 2-3 in DC

The 2009 National Health Policy Conference hosted by AcademyHealth and *Health Affairs* will be in Washington, DC, on February 2-3, 2009. Plenary sessions at this conference will include discussion of healthcare reform with experts from the Obama Administration, the 111th Congress, academia and the healthcare industry. Information and registration are available at <http://www.academyhealth.org/nhpc/register.htm>.

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CALL FOR PAPERS AND ABSTRACTS

9. Call for Abstracts for AcademyHealth 2009 Annual Research Meeting

The submission for paper, poster, and panel abstracts for the 2009 AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting is January 15, 2009. More information is available on the AcademyHealth Website at <http://www.academyhealth.org/arm/abstracts/index.htm>

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- **Data Issues Brief:** 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.
- **Intended Audience:** VA researchers and staff
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- **Internet Citation:** Data Issues Brief. December 2008. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Office of Research and Development, Health Services Research and Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (VIREC), Hines, IL.
<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/DataIssuesBrief/2008/DIB-0812er.pdf>
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