VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

DATA ISSUES BRIEF   **JUNE 2007**

CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE:

VIReC UPDATES:

1. VIReC Seeking a Technical Director

VIReC is seeking a Technical Director (Social Science Analyst) to be responsible for the technical administration of the VA Medicare Data Merge Initiative and oversee technical support for the Center including computer resources and data sharing policies. Interested persons should go to the USA jobs website: http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/ and see Announcement #07-276HT for information about the position and how to apply.

2. VIReC Seeking a Data Analyst

VIReC is seeking a data analyst (2 positions) to assist with processing and analyzing data for center-based projects. Interested persons should go to the USA jobs website: http://www.usajobs.opm.gov/ and see Announcement #07-285HT for information about how to apply.

VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

3. VA Research Data Security & Privacy

The VA Office of Research and Development (ORD) has published a new document on data security and privacy issues specific to research. It is important for researchers to be familiar with these topics: http://www.research.va.gov/resources/data-security/docs/Key_Points.pdf

4. Changes at the Enterprise Systems Management Office

Craig Luigart, the VHA's Chief Information Officer, designated Susan Lloyd as Acting Director for the Enterprise Systems Management Office effective April 30. She continues as well as Enterprise Systems Manager (ESM) for Health Data Systems (HDS). Mr. Luigart also designated Douglas Rosendale, DO, as Acting ESM, Health Provider Systems (HPS) effective May 29. Jeffrey Sartori, RN, BSN continues to share leadership of the HPS portfolio. More information about these announcements can be found on the VA Intranet (the address is given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

5. Change in Identification of Community Nursing Home Stays in MedSAS Inpatient Datasets

Researchers formerly used bedsection (bedsecn)=80 with station type (statype)=42 to specifically identify community nursing home stays. However, beginning in fiscal year 2006 (FY06), the VA introduced a set of new codes for categorizing treating specialties/bedsections for nursing home care. Presently the single way to identify community nursing home stays is bedsecn=44 with statype=42. Treating specialty code 44 became active on 7/1/2006, while treating specialty code 80 became inactive on 8/2/2006.

6. Under Ascertainment of Medication Use in Pharmacy Datasets

The inability to capture the use of ward stock, or medications maintained by clinics or ward units, at an individual patient level was discussed in a previous VIReC *Insights* (http://www.virec.research.va.gov/HistoricalDocuments/VirecInsights/Insights-v02n2.pdf). The concern about under ascertainment of medication use in pharmacy datasets was recently raised again vis-à-vis medications following surgical procedures.

The Pharmacy Benefits Management Strategic Healthcare Group (PBM/SHG) has identified that medications administered in the operating rooms or procedure suites are not completely reflected in the VA pharmacy datasets (PBM or Decision Support System Pharmacy National Data Extracts [DSS Pharmacy NDEs]) that are used for research at the patient level. This is also true for some medications administered in acute care settings such as the emergency department, post-anesthesia care units and intensive care units. In addition, many intravenous medications administered in outpatient infusion clinics are not always captured. This under representation of specific parenteral agents in the national VA datasets is currently being addressed by the PBM/SHG. Researchers should use caution when examining these medications and others where observed use is far below what is expected in the national pharmacy databases. If you have any questions, please write to the VIReC helpdesk: VIReC@va.gov.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

7. July Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar

The Cyber Seminars on Clinical Informatics, sponsored by VIReC, take place at 12 pm ET on the third Tuesday of each month. Laura M. Bonner, PhD, and Kathleen M. Lysell, PsyD, are presenting the July seminar on Tuesday, July 17. They will introduce seminar participants to the Mental Health Assistant, a graphical user interface developed for the mental health package in VistA. Participants are welcome to join the session on a "first come, first serve" basis. Information on the series can be found at: http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/catalog.cfm. For further information contact Laurel Nevinslong at laurel.nevinslong@va.gov.

CALL FOR PAPERS

8. AHRQ Sponsors Theme Issue for Health Services Research

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is sponsoring the first thematic issue for *Health Services Research* (*HSR*) on "Improving Efficiency and Value in Health Care." *HSR* is actively soliciting research papers, research methods papers, and evaluations or policy analyses. The deadline for initial submission of manuscripts is August 21, 2007. Further information can be found on the Internet at http://www.ahrq.gov/about/hsrcall.htm.

CONFERENCES
9. NIH Conference on Dissemination and Implementation in September 2007
The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research (OBSSR) will be holding a conference entitled "Building the Science of Dissemination and Implementation in the Service of Public Health" on September 10-11, 2007 on the NIH campus in Bethesda, Maryland. The conference builds upon NIH's new strategic prospectus advancing the "science of implementation" as well as the existing trans-NIH Funding Opportunity Announcement which seeks to support dissemination and implementation research in health. More information can be found on the Internet at http://obssr.od.nih.gov/di2007/index.html.

10. Society for Medical Decision Making Meeting in October 2007
The Society for Medical Decision Making (SMDM) will be meeting October 21-24, 2007 in Pittsburgh PA. SMDM's mission is to improve health outcomes through the advancement of proactive systematic approaches to clinical decision making and policy-formation in health care by providing a scholarly forum that connects and educates researchers, providers, policy-makers, and the public. This year's meeting will focus on exploring the science of decisions and consumer-driven, individualized health care. Meeting registration is now open at http://www.smdm.org/.

11. VHA eHealth University Held August 21-23 in Orlando
The Veterans Health Administration eHealth University (VHA VeHU) is VA's major annual training conference that provides education on the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) and related clinical software (VistA) developed by VHA. This year it is being held in Orlando FL from August 21-23. For registration information, go to the VeHU 2007 VA Intranet Web Site (the address is given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

● **Data Issues Brief:** is the monthly newsletter of the VA Information Resource Center (VIReC)
● **Intended Audience:** VA researchers and staff
● **Internet Citation:** *Data Issues Brief.* June 2007. 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/2007/DIB-0706er.pdf
● **Contact Information:** For comments, suggestions, or newsworthy topics that have not been addressed call 1-708-202-2413 or send a message to virec@va.gov.
● **Privacy:** Before subscribing, please review the VA Privacy Policy on Information Collected from E-mails and Web Forms.
● **Subscribe:** If this newsletter has been forwarded to you, and you would like to receive it monthly, please send an email to virec@va.gov. To stop receiving *Data Issues Brief* please send an email to virec@va.gov with UNSUBSCRIBE-DIB as the subject line.