VIReC

RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

DATA ISSUES BRIEF   **DECEMBER 2007**

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VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

1. FY07 Year-End Med SAS and DSS CNDE Files Available

The fiscal year 2007 (FY07) year-end Medical SAS (Med SAS) Inpatient and Outpatient files are now available. The FY07 year-end Decision Support System Clinical National Data Extracts (DSS CNDEs) have been processed for laboratory, laboratory results, and radiology. DSS expects these files to be posted by December 21, 2007.

2. New Pharmacy Variable Available from PBM

The Pharmacy Benefits Management/Strategic Healthcare Group (PBM/SHG) has made available beginning January 2006 the pharmacy outpatient co-pay status indicator. To request an extract from the PBM database a researcher must submit to the PBM/SHG a copy of their IRB approval, a summary of their study protocol, a completed PBM/SHG Research Data Request form and a signed hard copy of the PBM/SHG Data Use Agreement. Researchers can locate the request form and the data use agreement at on the VA Intranet (the address is given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*). For further information, contact cheryl.benson@va.gov, Administrative Assistant, Outcomes Research, PBM/SHG.

3. Decision Support Office Reports Problem with "Primary CPT Code" Datafield

The Decision Support Office, which manages development of the DSS database, has discovered a problem with a legacy datafield, "Primary CPT Code." This datafield has been included in the DSS database for the past ten years and has been available in the Outpatient (OP) CNDE and the OP DSS Cube. Following a review of the program logic populating this field it was determined that VistA doesn't support the entry or collection of a Primary CPT Code, nor does VA staff entering these data attempt to designate a CPT code as the primary one. Hospital staff enters into VistA all applicable CPTs for the encounter without designating a Primary CPT Code.

DSO recommends all users of the OP CNDEs, OP DSS Cube, and DSS OP Encounter (ENCTR) Files discontinue reporting the Primary CPT Code and/or basing decisions on the contents of this data field. DSS will discontinue posting values in the Primary CPT Code for the remainder of FY07. This will affect the DSS OP ENCTR File, OP CNDE, and the OP DSS Cube. This datafield will contain a blank for the remainder of FY07. DSS will eliminate the Primary CPT Code field in FY08 from DSS OP ENCTR files, the OP CNDEs, and the OP DSS Cube.

4. FY07 Diagnostic Cost Group Data Available at CFD

Fiscal Year 2007 (FY07) Diagnostic Cost Group (DCG) data are now available at the Corporate Franchise Data Center (CFD) in Austin. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Support Services Center (VSSC) have produced DCG risk scores (also known as Hierarchical Condition Category or HCC scores) beginning with FY98. DCGs use demographic and diagnostic data reported on medical claims (1) to classify patients into clinically homogenous groups and (2) to predict relative resource use. Diagnostic data are first sorted into similar conditions and then similar conditions are hierarchically ordered. Cost-based risk scores are computed by calculating the ratio of each individual's predicted cost over the average cost of a given population. In the case of VHA scores, the Medicare national average expenditure per patient is used. Additional information about DCGs can be found at http://www.dxcg.com. Questions about the VSSC's calculation of DCG scores can be addressed to sophie.lo@.va.gov.

NON-VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

5. 2007 AMIA Invitational Conference on Secondary Use of Health Data
The American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) convened in June 2007 a working group of experts, leaders, and citizens to follow-up on previous recommendations made to the association and further develop a national framework for the secondary use of health data. They initiated three technical working groups to develop a comprehensive taxonomy of use and users of secondary health data, to review technologies that are used to de-identify data sets and re-identify data sets of "anonymous" data, and to define data stewardship and related policy issues. Further information can be found at http://www.amia.org/inside/initiatives/healthdata/2007/index.asp.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

6. January Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar

Claire Snyder, PhD and Albert Wu MD, MPH are presenting a cyber seminar on Tuesday, January 15 entitled "Patient Viewpoint: A Website for Patient-Reported Outcomes Assessment." Dr. Snyder is Assistant Professor of Medicine at the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. Dr. Wu is Professor of Health Policy and Management at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. Participants are welcome to join the session on a "first come, first serve" basis. The Cyber Seminars on Clinical Informatics, sponsored by VIReC, take place at 12 pm ET on the third Tuesday of each month. Information can be found at: http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/catalog.cfm. For further questions contact Laurel Nevinslong at laurel.nevinslong@va.gov.

Please note: There will be no December Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar.

CONFERENCES

7. AcademyHealth 2008 National Health Policy Conference

The 2008 AcademyHealth National Health Policy Conference will take place on February 4-5, 2008 at the Capital Hilton in Washington, DC. This conference offers researchers an opportunity to hear directly from the policymakers about 2008 policy priorities. For more information and registration go to http://academyhealth.org/nhpc/.

CALL FOR PAPERS AND ABSTRACTS:

8. Call for Presentations for VHA 2008 VeHU Conference

The VHA eHealth University (VeHU) has announced a call for presentations for the 2008 conference (the VeHU address is given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).. VeHU is the VA's major annual training conference that provides education on the computerized patient record system (CPRS) and related Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA) software developed by the VHA. Although the date or location is not finalized for the conference, the VeHU planning committee is meeting the week of January 7, 2008 to discuss the agenda. The various course topics and tracks are listed on the submission webpage (provided in the Intranet version of the *Data Issues Brief*). If you have any questions, please contact Becky Monroe at: becky.monroe@va.gov

9. Call for Abstracts for AcademyHealth 2008 Annual Research Meeting

The submission deadline for paper, poster, and panel abstracts for the 2008 AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting is January 15, 2008. More information can be found on the AcademyHealth Web site http://www.academyhealth.org/.