



VA Information Resource Center

Data Issues Brief

February, 2002

1. Agent Orange Exposure Variables Changed in the Medical SAS Outpatient Datasets

Starting with FY 2002 data, changes have been made to the variables which describe exposure to Agent Orange in the Medical SAS Outpatient Visit (SF) and Outpatient Event (SE) datasets:

Added:

- Agent Orange Exposure Indicator (AGOIND) - This variable indicates whether the healthcare encounter was related to exposure to Agent Orange; formatted values: 0="NO," 1="YES"
- Agent Orange Location Code (AGOLOC) - This variable indicates where the Agent Orange exposure occurred; formatted values: K="KOREAN DMZ", U="UNKNOWN", V="VIETNAM".

Deleted:

- Agent Orange Exposure (ORNG) variable, formatted values 0="NO, 1="YES".

2. AHRQ Releases 1998 Nationwide Inpatient Sample Database

AHRQ released its 1998 Nationwide Inpatient Sample (NIS) database. This research tool can be used to analyze hospital care and contains data on inpatient use, outcomes, and charges for both insured and uninsured patients. This database is part of the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project, a federal, state, and industry partnership sponsored by AHRQ to develop standardized, high-quality data and tools for improving health care. Go to <http://www.ahrq.gov/data/hcup/hcupnis.htm> for information about the database. **Source is AHRQ Jan. 2002 newsletter.**

3. American Public Health Association (APHA) Annual Meeting & Exposition Abstract deadline

American Public Health Association is having its Annual Meeting and Exposition November 9-13, 2002, in Philadelphia, PA. A call for abstracts deadline is between February 4 and February 8, 2002, depending on which Section, Special Primary Interest Group (SPIG) or Caucus to which you wish to submit. <http://www.apha.org/meetings>

4. Update on the VA Medicare Data Merge Initiative

The VA Medicare Data Merge Initiative, funded by VHA, is a collaborative effort led by the Office of Policy and Planning and the Office of Research and Development, Health Services Research and Development Service. A new System of Records was issued in

January, 2001 and approved for use in February, 2001 for the VA data systems, which has facilitated progress on this initiative. Under a research data use agreement with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services for this initiative, VIREC is beginning analyses on released calendar year 1999 Medicare claims data for veterans who: 1) have used VA services, 2) are VA enrollees, or 3) have special population status. Research reports comparing VA and Medicare use will be produced by September, 2002. For more information about progress on this initiative contact VIREC at virec@research.hines.va.gov.

Data Issues Briefs are developed by the staff of 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. *Data Issues Briefs* are produced on a monthly basis and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Previous releases are posted and available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov>. If you wish to receive future issues directly or have any suggestions or comment about the *Data Issues Briefs*, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@research.hines.va.gov or call (708) 202-2413.