



VA Information Resource Center
Data Issues Brief
September 2002

1. CDC Publishes Abstract Statistics as Part of NHDS Extension Notice

The CDC often publishes notices to indicate that it will continue to collect data for various on-going studies. On August 2, 2002 the CDC published such a notice (67FR50441) with regards to the National Hospital Discharge Survey (NHDS), a study that has been in effect since 1965. Each year the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) collects data for the NHDS on approximately 300,000 discharges from a nationally representative sample of non-institutional hospitals, exclusive of federal, military and Veterans' Administration hospitals. The data items collected are the basic core of variables contained in the Uniform Hospital Discharge Data Set (UHDDS) in addition to two data items (admission type and source) which are identical to those needed for billing of inpatient services for Medicare patients. Data for approximately forty-five percent of the responding hospitals are abstracted from medical records while the remainder of the hospitals supply data through commercial abstract service organizations, state data systems, in-house tapes, or printouts. The estimated annual burden for this data collection is 2,653 hours. If you wish to review the CDC's estimates of burden hours, you can find a breakdown in the Federal Register notice at:

http://www.access.gpo.gov/su_docs/fedreg/a020802c.html

2. HHS releases Final Privacy Rules

On August 9, 2002 the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced the release of the final privacy rules under HIPAA. The rules were published in the Federal Register on August 14, 2002 (67 FR 53182).

For the most part, the rule incorporates changes proposed by HHS in the March Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The rule also adopts some changes regarding research that were mentioned in the NPRM and on which HHS had requested additional comments. These include the use of a limited data set for research and conforming the rule more closely to provisions of the Common Rule.

VIREC staff is reviewing the provisions of the final rule relating to research and we intend to release a new VIREC Insights to explain these as soon as possible.

You may view the new rule at several places on the Internet, but we advise going to the official website at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/hipaa>. The final rule is available there in PDF or text format along with supporting documents from HHS, including the explanatory "Fact Sheet".

3. Latest issue of VIREC Insights is released

The new issue is titled "*Veterans Health Information systems and Technology Architecture (VISTA) as a Research Tool*" and is posted on the VIREC Website at:

<http://www.virec.research.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.