



1. Latest Issue of VA Decision Support System's Newsletter *DSS Matters*

The Decision Support System (DSS) Program Office has announced publication of the December 2003-January 2004 issue of *DSS Matters*. The newsletter describes several new reports and a draft handbook that can be utilized via the VISN Support Services Center Intranet Web site. *DSS Matters* is available on the VA Intranet [REDACTED].

2. VHA 2004 eHealth University Annual Conference Scheduled May 24–28, 2004, in Dallas, TX

VHA eHealth University (VEHU, formerly known as Camp CPRS), VA's major training event for clinical software users (providers, nurses, pharmacists, Clinical Informatics staff, and Health Information Management staff), will occur May 24–28, 2004, in Dallas, Texas. VEHU may be of special interest to QUERI researchers interested in clinical informatics. January 30 is the deadline for abstract submissions, with registration to begin on that day as well. More information can be found on the VA Intranet at [REDACTED].

3. VA Information Technology Conference August 9-12, 2004, Austin, TX

The VA Information Technology Conference (ITC) will be held August 9-12, 2004, in Austin, Texas. ITC offers health services researchers an opportunity to interact with the developers of application and systems and to share ideas and information about the future of information technology in the VA. This event also may be of special interest to QUERI researchers interested in clinical informatics. Details, as they are developed, are on the VA Intranet at [REDACTED]. Information may be requested from vaitc@mail.va.gov.

4. ResDAC To Hold Medicare and Medicaid Data Training in Tampa FL

The Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC) will host two upcoming workshops in Tampa, FL, are directed at new users of data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS):

- CMS 101: Introduction to the use of Medicare data for research; (Feb 9–11, 2004)
Covers the origin, flow, quality and research applications of Medicare data. After taking the course, attendees will have the background to submit a proposal for research data to CMS and begin data analysis.
- CMS 102: Conducting Research with Medicaid Claims Data; (Jan 28–30, 2004)

Features hands-on computer work, small group projects, short lectures and demonstrations, and interactive learning. After taking the course, attendees will (1) have the background needed to submit a proposal to CMS for Medicaid claims data, and (2) be able to begin analyzing Medicaid claims data.

The courses are offered by the Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC), a CMS contractor that provides free assistance to academic, government, and non-profit researchers interested in using Medicare and/or Medicaid data for their research. Detailed information is at

<http://www.resdac.umn.edu/training/workshops.asp>.

5. DHHS/AHRQ Issues National Reports on Healthcare Quality and Disparity

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) recently released two Congressionally mandated reports developed by the Agency for Health Care Research and Quality, *The National Healthcare Quality Report* and the *The National Healthcare Disparities Report*, which provide baseline views of the quality of health care and differences in use of services. Prepublication copies of the reports are available online at <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/nhqr03/nhqrsum03.htm> and <http://www.ahrq.gov/qual/nhdr03/nhdrsum03.htm>.

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO DISSEMINATE TO COLLEAGUES! *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 monthly. All issues are available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/>. If you wish to receive email notification of future issues or have any suggestions or comment about the *Data Issues Briefs*, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@va.gov or call (708) 202-2413.