RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

Data Issues Brief	July 2005

1. DSS National Data Extract Data Issues

In communication with VIReC, the Decision Support Office (DSO) has identified two known problems with data in the DSS National Data Extracts (NDE). Researchers should be aware that:

- Records in the Lab Results (LAR) datasets do not reflect specimen type. For example, a calcium test result is reported without indication of the specimen type, be it plasma, spinal fluid, or another. This is true also of results labeled "Serum Creatinine," which is a misnomer, as the specimen type cannot be assumed to be serum. DSS does not currently collect or post specimen type. This will be corrected in FY2007. In the meantime, VIReC recommends that researchers using the LAR data determine if VistA includes a specimen type field for a particular test result. If the specimen type is specified in VistA, it is possible that the laboratory result in the LAR dataset cannot be used.

- The Division field value in NDE Outpatient dataset is not reliable in the current run (FY2005 only). The error has been remedied and will be fixed in the FY2005 third quarter run. Users are reminded that all DSS NDEs are cumulative year-to-date, so this error will be corrected for all FY05 records in the next run.

2. New NPCD Online Service

The National Patient Care Database (NPCD) has announced "BioSense VHA Patient Lookup." This new service provides demographic information in response to a user's entry of a patient or encounter ID. The service can be accessed on the VA Intranet Web site at ████████████████████████████████████.

3. Determination of Combat Veteran Eligibility

VHA Directive 2005-020, "Determining Combat Veteran Eligibility," was issued June 2, 2005. The directive specifies the criteria used to determine if a veteran's service meets the requirements of the VHA policy to provide full medical benefits for two years to recently discharged veterans who served in a theater of combat operations or in combat against a hostile force during a period of hostilities. The directive is available at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1270.

4. New VIReC Efforts Focus on Long Term Care Data

VIReC has formed a Long Term Care (LTC) Advisory Committee to help determine research interest in VHA LTC data and to identify the kind of support researchers interested in using these data need from VIReC. The committee's goals include prioritizing databases of interest for the development of specific support. Researchers who have an interest in VHA LTC data are encouraged to share their interests, questions, concerns, and research issues with Margaret Kraft, who is leading this VIReC effort. Dr. Kraft can be reached at margaret.kraft@med.va.gov.

5. *DSS Matters* **Newsletter**

The June-July 2005 issue of the DSS newsletter includes a report about the Decision Support Office (DSO) collaboration with VHA Physician Productivity and Staffing Advisory Group and the VHA Specialty Care Physician Productivity Subcommittee to achieve 100% capture of physician workload and to develop a formal process to measure and report on VHA physician productivity. Other articles report on the DSS User Conference and describe the patient health information available in DSS. *DSS Matters* is available on the DSS Intranet Web site at ████████████████████████████████████.

6. **VeHU Presentations Available Online**

The VHA eHealth University held May 23-26, 2005, included over 160 breakout sessions about VHA clinical software packages. Meeting sessions that were broadcast can be viewed via the Intranet at ████████████████████████████. Slide presentations from numerous classes can be accessed via the Intranet at ████████████████████████████████████.

7. **Fall Training Opportunities for Medicare Data Users**

Research users of VA Medicare data might want to attend one or more of the workshops being offered this fall by the Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC) at the University of Minnesota:

- CMS 101: Introduction to the use of Medicare data for research
  [Sept 28-30th (W-F).](#)
- CMS 102: Conducting Research with Medicaid Claims Data
  None Pending
- CMS 301: Using SEER/Medicare Data for Research - **New 1 day workshop**
  TBA
- CMS 302: Conducting Economic Research using Medicare Data - **New 1 day workshop**
  [October 6th, 2005 (TH).](#)

Questions or comments can be addressed to ResDAC's Outreach and Training Coordinator, Phyllis Beaudette, at 612-626-4247 or beaud005@umn.edu.

8. **HSR&D Cyber Seminars Schedule Available**

Information about both past and future cyber seminars is available on the Health Services Research & Development Service Web site at http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/.

9. **AMIA Symposium Announced**

The American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) has announced its annual symposium, entitled this year "*Biomedical and Health Informatics: From Foundations, to Applications to Policy.*" The meeting will be held October 22-26, 2005 in Washington DC*. Registration and meeting information can be found at*: http://www.amia.org/meetings/annual/current/.