



1. NPCD Changes Affecting Medical SAS Datasets

The following items are selected from the NPCD Audit Trail of Changes. For details and related news, see Intranet sites [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

- FY2005 Ambulatory Care Data: The final runs of FY2005 data in the ambulatory care SAS datasets (SE, SF, and IE files) will begin October 21, 2005.
- The SAS file MDPPRD.MDP.SAS.IE05, which contains Ambulatory Care inpatient (Professional Services) encounters, now contains only FY05 data. Previously it had contained information for encounters that occurred in fiscal years other than FY05.

2. October Cyber Seminars

HSR&D Service Cyber Seminars in October 2005 are scheduled to include the following:

- 10/5 *HERC Health Economics Course #15: Economic Analysis for Management/Adoption of CEA.* Wei Yu, PhD, HERC
- 10/6 *VA Medicare Datasets for Research.* Denise M. Hynes, PhD, VIREC
- 10/12 *Risk-adjustment in the VA Data.* Susan DesHarnais, PhD, VIREC
- 10/26 *HERC Monthly Cyber Seminar.* TBA

See http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars for details on seminar times and registration.

3. Revised DSS Research User Guide from VIREC

VIREC has published a revised version of the VIREC Research User Guide: VHA Decision Support System (DSS) Clinical National Data Extracts (NDEs) FY2000-FY2004. The new edition extends the Fiscal Years covered in the previous edition (FY2001-FY2003). It is available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/RUG/RUG.htm>.

4. VHA Electronic Information Systems to Flag Katrina Victims

An Emergency Response Indicator (ERI) field has been added to VistA to facilitate VA efforts to identify, track, and assist patients affected by emergencies such as Hurricane Katrina. Based on ZIP codes, records for some patients, the ERI field was automatically set to "K" for Hurricane Katrina, and local facility staffs can make the entry manually as well. The ERI will be added also to other information systems, including the National Patient Care Database (NPCD). The NPCD change will occur in a retransmission of records from VistA after the FY2005 data closeout. Users of the Medical SAS Datasets will see the ERI field for FY2005 only in the Revised SAS Datasets that are scheduled to be built in January 2006. Information about the VistA ERI is available in the publication *Enrollment Update*, Vol. 3, Issue 2, on the VA Intranet at [REDACTED]. Information on the FY2005 Revised SAS Datasets, as these are created, will become available via the NPCD Audit Trail Intranet site ([REDACTED]) and in VIREC's *Data Issues Brief*. An explanation of the Revised SAS Datasets in general is provided in the VIREC Research User Guides for Medical SAS Inpatient and Outpatient Datasets, available at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/RUG/RUG.htm>.

5. VIREC Seeking Associate Director

VIREC has begun seeking an Associate Director, with a notice posted on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov>. Min-Woong Sohn, PhD, resigned as VIREC Associate Director July 1, 2005, and is moving to the VHA Midwest Center for Health Services and Policy Research at Hines VA Hospital October 1, 2005.

6. Current Estimates of Veteran Population

The current estimate and projection of the veteran population for 2000 through 2033, prepared by the VA Office of the Actuary (OACT), is provided in VetPop2004 Ver 1.0, which that office released in April 2005. Data for the estimate and projection came from (a) extracts from a Census 2000 sample data prepared for OACT by the Bureau of the Census, (b) data provided by the Defense Manpower Data Center on service member separations from active duty, (c) information from the DoD Office of the Actuary, and (d) VA administrative data from the Veterans Benefits Administration and the Veterans Health Administration. VetPop2004 Ver 1.0 is available on the Intranet at

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7. October 11 Application Deadline for VIREC IT Specialist Position

VIREC is seeking a full-time IT Specialist to serve as system administrator and provide PC support for a small team that supports VHA health care researchers. The current environment has three Windows servers and 15 workstations. Information about the position and the announcement on USAJobs is at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov>.

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.