



1. Final FY2005 Medical SAS Datasets Announced

As announced by National Data Systems, VHA Health Data and Informatics Program, the final SAS runs for FY2005 were completed during October 2005. Details concerning specific files and their respective completion dates can be found on the VA Intranet at [REDACTED].

2. Length of Stay Variable in Medical SAS Datasets Changed

The calculation of patients' length of stay (variable LS) in the inpatient Medical SAS Datasets has been changed. Effective October 1, 2005, LS will be calculated so that Pass Days are subtracted from length of stay days. Details, including the current and past formulas for calculating LS can be found on the VA Intranet at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED].

3. Last Military Sexual Trauma File Produced

The last Military Sexual Trauma (MST) SAS File was created on October 23, 2005. Although there will no longer be an MST file, beginning in FY2006, there will be a new variable in the Medical SAS Outpatient Event File. This is variable MST, Military Sexual Trauma, and it is part of the FY2006 Event File proc contents on the VA Intranet at [REDACTED].

4. December 14 Cyber Seminar on Research Use of Health Data Repository Data (HDR)

VIREC is sponsoring an HSR&D cyber seminar entitled "Research Uses of the Data in the Health Data Repository" on December 14, 2005, 2:00 p.m. EST. Presenter will be Tim Cromwell, PhD, Project Manager for the Health Data Repository under development by the VHA Office of Information. The seminar will address what the HDR is, what data will be available to researchers, how data will be requested and obtained, and a tentative timetable. Information about registering for the cyber seminar is on the HSR&D Internet Web site at http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/.

5. Abstracts Deadline for AcademyHealth Research Meeting

January 13, 2006, is the deadline to submit abstracts for the 2006 Annual Research Meeting of AcademyHealth. Full information about the meeting, will be held June 25-27 in Seattle, and the process for abstract submission is available at <http://www.academyhealth.org/arm/index.htm>.

6. Changes to VHA Medication Co-Payments for Calendar Year 2006

Effective January 1, 2006, the co-pay for veterans receiving prescriptions from the VHA will increase from \$7.00 to \$8.00 (Additional \$1.00) per prescription. The annual cap for veterans enrolled in Priority Groups 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 will be \$960.00. Detailed information is in VHA Directive 2005-052 (November 15, 2005), on the VA Intranet at:
http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1342.

7. HSR&D National Meeting Registration Begins

Registration is open for the Health Services Research & Development Service National Meeting, which will be held at the Hyatt Regency Crystal City in Arlington, VA from February 15-17, 2006. The meeting theme is "Implementing Equity: Making Research Work for Diverse Veteran Populations." Full information about the meeting and instructions for registration are available on the Internet at http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/about/national_meeting/2006/.

8. VIREC Presentations at HSR&D National Meeting

The following presentations by VIREC staff will be made at the National HSR&D 2006 meeting. The VIREC breakfast session will occur the morning of February 17.

- Workshop: *Clinical Decision Support Systems: The Iterative Process of Design*
Browning MM; Hynes DM; Goldstein MK; Daniels D; Cohen AN; Young AS; Doebbling BN
- Workshop: *New VIREC Tools for Researchers Using VA Data*
Murphy, P; Arnold, N; Koelling K; Mohr, T
- Oral presentation (concurrent paper session): *Death, where is thy record? Death Ascertainment for Veterans*
Arnold NL; Sohn M; Hynes DM; Maynard C
- Oral Presentation: *Transition to the new race/ethnicity data collection standards in the Department of Veterans Affairs*
Sohn, MW; Zhang H; Arnold N; Stroupe K; Taylor B; Wilt T; Hynes D
- Breakfast Session: *VA Information Resource Center (VIREC)*
Stevens, JM; Mallin, K. (and other VIREC staff)

9. VIREC Seeking Associate Director

As noted in the November *Data Issues Brief*, VIREC is seeking an Associate Director, and the position is described on the VIREC Web site (<http://www.virec.research.va.gov>) and the VHA HSR&D Web site (<http://www1.va.gov/resdev/about/organization/employment.cfm#virec>). Information is now available also on the AcademyHealth Internet Web site at <http://www.academyhealth.org/career/hines.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> or <http://www1.va.gov/resdev/about/organization/employment.cfm#virec>. 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.