

### **1. VIREC Bids Farewell to Assistant Director**

Patricia A. Murphy is retiring from the VA Information Resource Center on February 28, 2006. Pat joined VIREC in November 1998, shortly after it was established, to lead VIREC's efforts to learn about and document the VHA Decision Support System (DSS) data. In 2004 she was appointed as Assistant Director overseeing VIREC's dissemination and customer service activities. She oversaw the re-design of VIREC's Web site to its current organization and navigation; produced the monthly *Data Issues Brief*, and *VIREC Insights* until 2005; managed the HSRData Listserv; and edited numerous reports, manuscripts, and Research User Guides. She has represented VIREC at HSR&D, QUERI, and AcademyHealth meetings and at VHA Information Technology Conferences, staffing the VIREC exhibit booth, presenting posters, and participating in workshops. Pat will be missed by many in the larger VA HSR&D community as well as at VIREC.

### **2. FY2006 DSS Identifiers and Changes to Co-payment for Outpatient Services**

VHA Directive 2006-006, "Implementation of Changes for Co-Payments for Outpatient Medical Care Provided to Veterans by the Department of Veterans Affairs," was issued February 6, 2006. It explains the outpatient co-payment tiers of 'No Co-payments,' 'Basic \$15 Co-payment,' and 'Specialty \$50 Co-payment,' which took effect October 2005. An appendix to the directive includes the FY2006 Decision Support System (DSS) Identifiers (stop codes) for outpatient care. The directive is available on the Internet at [http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=1378](http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1378).

### **3. New Information on VIREC Web Site**

VIREC has issued its first technical report and a new research user guide. Both items are available using links from the Web site homepage at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov>.

- *VIREC Technical Report 1: Comparison of VA Outpatient Prescriptions in the DSS Datasets and the PBM Database* presents analysis of data for a cohort of surgical patients enrolled in a VA CSP study, comparing data from the VA Decision Support System (DSS) National Data Extract Pharmacy Datasets and the VA Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) Database.
- *VIREC Research User Guide: VHA Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) Monthly Enrollment File* provides an overview and variable-level documentation for the file that is created by the ADUSH office to produce national statistics on VHA expenditures, enrollment, and patients; develop statistical models to forecast enrollment and expenditures; and perform policy analyses. The guide is being issued in draft with a request for comments, suggestions, and corrections.

#### 4. VHA Directive Defines Data Entry Requirements for Administrative Data

VHA Directive 2006-002, "Data Entry Requirements for Administrative Data," was issued January 19, 2006. The directive establishes policy and procedures for entry of administrative data elements for VHA beneficiaries into VHA computerized information systems. The directive is available at [http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub\\_ID=1370](http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1370)

#### 5. AHRQ Patient Safety and Health IT Conference

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is seeking participants for the AHRQ 2006 Annual Conference on patient safety and health information technology. AHRQ is inviting submissions for session presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and posters for the conference to be held June 4 - 7, 2006, at the Renaissance Hotel, Washington DC. Submission instructions are available on the Internet at <http://healthit.ahrq.gov/home/index.html>

#### 6. Data and Database Methods Presentations at HSR&D National Meeting

The following presentations at the VA HSR&D Service National Meeting will be addressing databases, database methods, and information systems:

- Workshop: *Clinical Decision Support Systems: The Iterative Process of Design*  
Browning MM; Goldstein MK; Cohen AN; Young AS; Doebbling BN
- Workshop: *New VIREC Tools for Researchers Using VA Data*  
Murphy P, Arnold N, Koelling K
- Concurrent Paper Session: *Research Methods with VA Databases*
  - *Death, Where is Thy Record? Death Ascertainment for Veterans*  
Arnold NL
  - *Use of VA Pharmacy Services by Medicare HMO Enrollees*  
Morgan R
  - *Is There Overlap of Coding of Diagnoses for Veterans Who Use Both VA and Medicare Services?*  
Petersen L
  - *Identification of Patient Safety Events from VA Administrative Data: Is it Valid?*  
Rosen A
  - *Transition to the New Race/Ethnicity Data Collection Standards in the Department of Veterans Affairs*  
Sohn MW
- Breakfast Session: *VA Information Resource Center (VIREC)*  
Stevens JM, Mallin K (and other VIREC staff)

More details about the meeting are available at:

[http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/about/national\\_meeting/2006/](http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/about/national_meeting/2006/)

---

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@rva.gov](mailto:virec@rva.gov) or call (708) 202-2413.