

1. Clinical Informatics Seminars

This monthly seminar presents expert discussion of key issues in clinical informatics for VA researchers. Join experts from the VA Information Resource Center (VIREC) and the Center of Excellence on Implementing Evidence-Based Practice for these lively and informative presentations. Seminars are held on the third Tuesday of the month from 12 – 1 pm (Eastern). Denise Hynes, PhD, RN, VIREC Director kicked off the series on March 21 (see below).

The next seminar will be presented by Bradley Doebbeling, MD, MSc, Center on Implementing Evidence-Based Practice Director, on Tuesday, April 18: “Strategies and Priorities to Using Health Information Technology to Implement Evidence-Based Practice.” For information go to http://www.hsrdr.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/.

2. Recorded HSRD 2006 Cyber Seminars on VA Databases and Clinical Informatics Now Available

“[Introduction to VIREC Tools for Using VA Databases](#),” Denise M. Hynes, March 7, 2006. This session provided an overview of the tools and resources available from VIREC, and how to access these resources on the VIREC Web site.

“[Attributes of an Ideal Information System to Support Implementation Research](#),” Denise M. Hynes, March 21, 2006. This session discussed those characteristics of an information management system that support managers, providers and patients and promote outcomes consistent with evidence.

3. Updated VHA Coding Handbook Available

The Health Information Management Systems office has just issued VHA Coding Handbook Version 6.0, dated March 13, 2006. This comprehensive handbook provides coding guidelines for inpatient and outpatient care, for special screening programs (e.g., AIDS/HIV, Persian Gulf War Syndrome), and many other aspects of VA health care. It can be accessed from the VIREC Internet site at http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/VHACodingHandbook/HANDBOOK_FOR_CODING_GUIDELINES_V6.0.pdf

4. Two New Products Regarding VA Patients Enrolled in Medicaid Available from HCFE

There are two products now available on the Health Care Financing and Economics (HCFE) Web site resulting from a VA HSR&D grant to HCFE researchers to look at VA patients also enrolled in Medicaid. “The HCFE State-Level Medicaid Dataset (version 2005A)” includes information on all Medicaid eligibles, beneficiaries, and payments by state for federal fiscal years 1997 through 2002 and is available for download on the Internet at http://dcc2.bumc.bu.edu/chqoer/HCFE/mysite3/Data_State_Level.htm. The dataset does not include any data for individual patients.

HCFE’s Data Brief, “An Empirical Method for Measuring the Restrictiveness of State Medicaid Programs,” explores possible reasons for the variation in the proportion of US population enrolled in

Medicaid across states and across time. This Data Brief is posted on the HCFE Web site: <http://www.hcfe.org/>.

5. HEC Creates Registry File for POWs

The Health Eligibility Center (HEC) has created a registry file for confirmed Former Prisoners of War (POW). The file was created by obtaining data from the Department of Defense, Veterans Benefit Administration, National Archives and Records Administration and the VA medical centers. Information can be found on the VA Intranet (address given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

6. GAO Issues Report on VA and DOD Health Care Resource Sharing

Legislation in December 2002 required that the Departments of Veteran Affairs (VA) and Defense (DOD) implement two programs known as the Joint Incentive Fund and the Demonstration Site Selection to increase resource sharing between the departments. The United States Government Accountability Office (GAO) was required by this legislation to report on the progress of VA and DOD in their efforts to carry out these programs to increase resource sharing. The GAO's March 2006 report can be accessed at <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d06315.pdf>.

7. NHCU Services Categorized into Identifiable Units and Defined by New Codes

VHA Directive 2006-014, "Admission Criteria, Service Codes, and Discharge Criteria for VA Nursing Home Care Units (NHCU)," includes policy regarding the designation of NHCU services into identifiable units defined by new codes. There are 9 service categories and treating specialty codes classified under short stays (e.g., rehabilitation, respite care, etc.) and 5 falling under long stays (e.g., spinal cord injury and disorders, maintenance care, etc.). The directive also includes information about admission, service delivery, and discharge criteria for NHCUs. The directive is available on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1394.

8. ProClarity Classes Offered by VSSC

The VISN Support Service Center (VSSC) newsletter highlights new data cubes and reports available on VSSC's website. The March 2006 issue also lists opportunities to develop proficiency with ProClarity analytical tools, including self-guided tutorials, on-line classes available at no cost and tuition-free classes at ProClarity's Boise, Idaho offices. See the newsletter on the VA Intranet at http://fcdm.vssc.med.va.gov/Newsletters/Document%20Library/VSSC%20Newsletter%2003_2006.doc.

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 or call (708) 202-2413.