

**1. May 16 Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Features How to Request Changes to VA Information Systems**

This month's Cyber Seminar on Clinical Informatics offered by VIREC and the Center of Excellence on Implementing Evidence-Based Practice features Dr. David Douglas, Associate Director for Information Management at Portland VAMC. His presentation is entitled "New IT Service Requests and New Commercial Technology Requests: A How-To Guide for VHA Researchers." This seminar takes place on Tuesday, May 16 at 12 noon ET.

All Health Services Research & Development Service training seminars are made available as recordings for researchers who are unable to participate in the live session. These recordings can be accessed on the Internet at <http://hsrdtraining.webex.com>.

**2. Full Stay and Bed Section Stay Recodes Removed from the VA Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets Effective 7 April 2006**

On April 10, 2006, the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) group announced that certain categorical diagnosis fields are being dropped from the FY2006 version of the Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets (for announcement of the change, see the NPCD Audit Trail of Changes in the Intranet (address given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

Specifically, the FY2006 main, bed section, procedure, and surgery datasets for all categories of inpatient care (acute inpatient, extended, observation, and non-VA) drop the variables DXLSF32 and DXLSF120. The bed section datasets for all categories of inpatient care drop the DXLSB32 and DXLSB120 variables.

DXLSF32 and DXLSF120 were categorical recodings of the ICD-9-CM diagnostic code responsible for the major part of the patient's full length of stay in the hospital. DXLSB32 and DXLSB120 were categorical recodings of the ICD-9-CM diagnostic code responsible for length of stay within a bed section. For description of the dropped variables, see: "VIREC Research User Guide FY2004 VHA Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets" at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/RUG/RUG.htm>, or, VA researchers may search the VHA MetaData Registry on the Intranet (address given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

**3. VIREC Technical Report 2: VA-NDI Mortality Data Merge Project**

This report presents the findings of a study that (1) analyzed and compared the four sources for death data currently available within the VA (Medicare Vital Status Files, Social Security Administration Death Master File, BIRLS Death File and VHA Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets), (2) determined the benefit of using the National Death Index to identify additional deaths and validate deaths in others sources, (3) developed a methodology to use these sources most cost effectively for death ascertainment in research, and (4) proposed a strategy to maintain a database of death date information, providing cost estimates for annual maintenance and updates. This report can be accessed on the VIREC website homepage at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/> under "What's New at VIREC?"

#### **4. Social Security Administration “Death” File available at Austin Automation Center**

As of May 8, 2006, the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) group is making two new SAS files containing data from the Social Security Administration (SSA) Death File available to researchers. These files are cumulative and are updated on a monthly basis during the first week of the month as new data are available from SSA. The datasets are housed at the Austin Automation Center. The files are:

MDPPRD.MDP.SAS.SSA.DEATH and MDPPRD.PRO.SAS.SSA.DEATH.

The files are the same with the exception that the MDPPRD.PRO.SAS.SSA.DEATH file contains real SSN and name information. Additional details of the new datasets are posted on the NPCD Intranet website (address given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

#### **5. New Lab Results Added to VA DSS National Data Extracts in FY 2006**

The VHA Decision Support System (DSS) National Data Extracts (NDE) have added new labs to their Lab Results file (LAR) in FY 2006. These labs are: Direct Bilirubin, C Reactive Protein, C Reactive Protein HS, Serum Calcium, Carbon Dioxide, Chloride, Creatinine eGFR, B Natriuretic Peptide, O<sub>2</sub> Saturation, PO<sub>2</sub>, PCO<sub>2</sub> and Total Protein. DSS NDE lab information can be found on the VA Intranet (address given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

#### **6. Release of New VHA Directive for Patient Care Data Capture**

The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) released a new directive that establishes the requirement for capture of all outpatient encounters, inpatient appointments in outpatient clinics, and inpatient billable services. VHA Directive 2006-026 is effective as of May 5, 2006 and expires on May 31, 2011.

Since October 1, 1996, VHA facilities have been required to report all electronic data concerning the provision of services in VHA facilities, which included outpatient data, to the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) in Austin, TX. The new Directive expands that requirement to include the capture of inpatient encounters for patients seen in outpatient clinics and inpatient billable professional services. The new directive is available on the Internet at <http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/publications.cfm?pub=1>.

#### **7. New Open-Access Journal on Implementation Science**

*Implementation Science* is a new online, open-access journal supported in part by VA's Health Services Research and Development Service. The journal is published by BioMed Central, which publishes more than 140 open-access journals on the Web. More than half these journals, including *Implementation Science*, are "independent," in that the researchers who launch them have editorial control. Brian Mittman, PhD, of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System, is co-editor-in-chief of the new journal along with Martin Eccles, PhD, a British health-services investigator.

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