

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

DATA ISSUES BRIEF

OCTOBER 2008

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VIREC UPDATES:

1. **Race Data Quality Update on VIREC Web Site**

Results from a VIREC study examining the quality of race and ethnicity data are now posted on the VIREC Internet Web site (<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/> under “What’s New at VIREC”). While race could not be ascertained from Veterans Health Administration (VHA) workload data for 44% of patients, the addition of Medicare data reduced race data missingness to less than one percent among Medicare-enrolled VHA users and 75 percent overall. A technical report containing full details about this study will be available on the VIREC Web site in the near future. VIREC is currently examining the concordance between race/ethnicity values in VA and Medicare records. A forthcoming *Data Quality Update* will describe results of this investigation.

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VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

2. **New VHA Directive on Adverse Drug Event Reporting and Monitoring**

Investigators participating in research protocols involving drugs may want to read the new policy specified in *VHA Directive 2008-059: Adverse Drug Event Reporting and Monitoring* (September 29, 2008). This directive establishes national policy and procedures for reporting, monitoring, and surveillance of adverse drug events (ADEs) entered into the VHA’s spontaneous ADE reporting system for observed and new ADEs at VHA medical centers. The directive states, all ADEs meeting the definition of observed adverse drug *reactions* (ADRs), in distinction to ADEs or adverse drug *events*, must also be reported into the VA ADE reporting system, including ADRs, (i.e. *reactions*), observed in subjects participating in VA research protocols. The directive can be found on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1773.

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3. VHA Consult Policy

Researchers investigating issues in collaborative care may be interested in *VHA Directive 2008-056: VHA Consult Policy* (September 16, 2008). *Directive 2008-056* defines policy for the management of the clinical consultation process. The directive establishes procedure for completing timely and efficient consults by outlining how to initiate, manage, and communicate clinical consultations using the Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS) consult functionality. *Attachment A: Recommended Content for Service Agreements* addresses written service agreements between parties within or across facilities to outline workflow rules in the consult process. The directive can be found on the Internet at http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1765.

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4. Health Care Benefits and Co-pay Exemption for Combat Veterans Post-Discharge

VHA Directive 2008-054: Combat Veteran Health Care Benefits and Co-pay Exemption Post-Discharge from Military Service (September 9, 2008), may affect research projects addressing services for recently discharged veterans serving in combat operations after November 11, 1998. According to this directive, amendments to Title 38, United States Code, include extending the 2-year eligibility limitation for “combat veterans” to receive hospital care, medical services, and nursing home care for any illness. Combat veterans discharged or released from active service on or after January 28, 2008, now have a 5–year period to enroll for VA healthcare services. Veterans who meet these requirements are placed in priority group (PG) 6 (unless eligible for a higher PG placement) and receive care and services at no cost for any illness or condition possibly related to their combat service. The directive also indicates, “combat-theatre veterans who were moved from PG 6 to a lower priority (based on the law’s former 2-year limitation for eligibility in this category) must be placed back in PG 6 for 5 years beginning from the date of their discharge or release.” For more information see http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1758.

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EDUCATION:

5. VIREC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Series

Joanne Spetz, PhD is presenting a cyber seminar on Tuesday, October 21, entitled “CPRS and BCMA Through the Rearview Mirror: Retrospectively Evaluating Health IT Implementations.” Dr. Spetz is Associate Professor in the School of Nursing at the University of California, San Francisco and Associate Director for the Center for California Health Workforce Studies. She has worked within the VA with a number of VA researchers. Participants are welcome to join the cyber seminar on a “first come, first serve” basis. The VIREC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminars take place at 12 pm ET on the third Tuesday of each month. Information can be found on VIREC’s VA Internet Website at: <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/EducationResources/Seminars/Clinical-Informatics.htm>. For further questions, contact Joanne Stevens (joanne.stevens@va.gov), VIREC’s Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Coordinator.

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- **Data Issues Brief:** is a monthly newsletter published by 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.
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- **Internet Citation:** Data Issues Brief. June 2008. Department of Veterans Affairs, Veterans Health Administration, Office of Research and Development, Health Services Research and Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (VIREC), Hines, IL.
<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/DataIssuesBrief/2008/DIB-0806er.pdf>
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