VA Information Resource Center
Data Issues Brief
February, 2001

1. VHA Meta Data Registry

The VHA Meta Data Registry (MDR) is being developed by the VHA Office of Information to provide a repository of information about VHA databases. These "data about data," or meta data, will provide insight into data redundancies, data usage, and dependencies. The VHA MDR is a web-based, centralized repository. It will store and maintain adopted data standards, as well as meta data for data elements of existing VHA databases. Partial meta data for a few VHA National Databases have been loaded and users can get an idea of how the registry will function. To view this new tool, visit the Web site: ██████████████████████████ (NOTE: this is an internal VA Web site). If you have any suggestions on how this tool might be improved, please send your comments to: cowper@research.hines.med.va.gov.

2. From the OI Top Issues Page. . . . VA SMART CARD

For the month of February 2001, the VA Smart Card Pilot is the top issue at the Office of Information (OI). VA will take a measured approach to the VA Express Card and will conduct a formal pilot, involving 40,000 veterans, to determine functional utility of the Express Card and to ascertain the return on investment. From the test, VA hopes to determine if the Express Card provides enough added value for veterans and VA to justify the cost. The pilot will begin the week of February 19 at VA medical, benefits and cemetery facilities in Milwaukee and Iron Mountain only. It has been determined that the initial pilot, which would have deployed nearly 200,000 Express Cards in VISN 12, was larger than needed and that a focus on a smaller geographic area can more cost effectively provide the necessary data, information and analysis of user satisfaction for VA to make informed decisions. By carefully reviewing the outcome of the Milwaukee/Iron Mountain pilot, VA will make a determination about the next step it will take regarding the Express Card. Read details.

3. Data Consortium Web Page

The five core members of the VHA Data Consortium (Allocation Resource Center, Healthcare Analysis and Information Group, Management Science Group, Planning System Support Group, and the VISN Service Support Center), along with their participating affiliates (Office of Information, VA Information Resource Center, dSs, Austin Automation Center, and the National Performance Data Feedback Center) have developed a Web site that includes links to all member and affiliate Web sites and provides a search engine which queries all Web sites for requested information. The Data Consortium was convened by request of the Under Secretary for Health, Dr. Thomas Garthwaite. The purpose is to promote standard operational definitions across the major report-generating entities in VHA. The Data Consortium strives to improve information reliability and customer access for the purposes of quality measurement, planning, policy analysis, financial management, etc. The organization is a consortium of equals with chair responsibilities rotated among the charter members. The Consortium meets on a quarterly basis and membership is by invitation only. Each core member reports directly to their Chief Officer on Data Consortium activities. The Chief Officers then brief the Under Secretary. The Web site for the Data Consortium is (VA Only):
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4. Census Data Release Schedule

Beginning in March 2001, results from the Census 2000 will begin to be available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The first files scheduled for release are:

a. Census 2000 Redistricting Data Summary File - State population counts for race and Hispanic or Latino categories**.** *Media: Internet, CD-ROM, DVD; Geographic Unit: Blocks; Available: March-April, 2001*

b. *Demographic Profile* - Population totals and selected population and housing characteristics in a single table. *Media: Internet, CD-ROM, DVD, paper; Geographic Unit: Places, Census tracts; Available: May-July, 2001*

c. *Congressional District Demographic Profile* - Population totals and selected population and housing characteristics in a single table for Congressional Districts only. *Media: Internet, CD-ROM, DVD, paper; Geographic Unit: Congressional Districts of the 106th Congress; Available: May-July, 2001*

For a complete schedule of releases, visit the Census Web site:
 http://www.census.gov/population/www/censusdata/c2kproducts.html

For additional information on Census 2000 products, please call the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Customer Services at 301-457-4100.