



VA Information Resource Center

Data Issues Brief

April, 2001

1. Military Retirement File Available at Austin

The Office of VHA Policy & Forecasting (105D) and Planning Systems Support Group (PSSG) in collaboration with the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) has produced a military retiree file. The file is located at AAC, with the file name: DSN=RMTPRD.R10ARE1.SAS.ENR0201.RET0301.PSSG. The file contains data from the March 2001 military retiree file provided by VBA with merged user flags from the February 2001 enrollment file. Variables in the data set include: scrambled Social Security Number (SCRSSN), date of birth (DOB), gender (SEX), and enrollee and user flags for FY95-FY01. The unit of analysis is a living military retiree as of March 2001. To learn more about this file, contact the PSSG at (352) 374-6080.

2. Annual Performance Report for FY 2000 Available

The *Annual Performance Report FY 2000* documents VA's progress in providing high-quality, timely benefits and services to America's veterans. This report identifies the achievements VA recorded during FY 2000 that have contributed to attaining the goals and objectives in the VA Strategic Plan and Annual Performance Plan. The report contains many useful background tables e.g., the number of patients treated, patient satisfaction with care, and performance measures by organization (VHA, VBA, NCA). VA Research is highlighted under Strategic Goal 4. The report is a new format of the previously titled Annual Report of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs. This report can be viewed at: <http://www.va.gov/budget/report/index.htm>.

3. National Survey of Veterans: Update on Progress

According to the latest information available, interviews for the National Survey of Veterans began in February and are scheduled to continue through August 2001. The purpose of the survey is to obtain current information relevant to the planning and budgeting of VA programs and services and to provide data on current characteristics of the veteran population. The types of variables that will be collected in the survey include:

socio-demographic and economic characteristics, military background, health status, VA and non-VA benefit usage, anticipated burial plans, and veterans' information sources regarding VA benefits. The data from the survey will enable the VA to follow changing trends in the veteran population, make comparisons of characteristics of veterans who use VA programs versus those who do not, and provide a data resource for policy analyses. The VIREC staff will continue to follow the progress of the National Survey of Veterans and alert the research community when the data are available for investigators' use. The point of contact for the National Survey of Veterans is Susan Krumhaus, Statistician (susan.krumhaus@mail.va.gov) in VA's Office of Policy and Planning.

4. Dr. Garthwaite Lauds QUERI in Statement to Congress

In a statement before the Subcommittee on Health, Committee on Veterans' Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives on April 3, 2001, VA's Under Secretary for Health Thomas Garthwaite, M.D. praised the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) as an example of VA's commitment to put "quality first until first in quality." Dr. Garthwaite stated, "In 1998, VA launched the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI). The QUERI mission is to translate research discoveries and innovations into better patient care and systems improvements. It is founded on the principle that practice needs determine the research agenda, and research results determine interventions that improve the quality of patient care. The Institute of Medicine, in its report '*Crossing the Quality Chasm*,' specifically noted QUERI as a model for translating the best research evidence into the best patient care." To see the copy of Dr. Garthwaite's complete statement visit Web site: http://www.va.gov/OCA/HVAC_TESTIMONY_HEALTH_USA.HTM.

5. VIREC Welcomes New Subscribers

In response to a recent invitation through the HSRData e-mail user group, nearly 100 new subscribers to the monthly *Data Issues Brief* were added to our e-list. Since some of the new subscribers may be unfamiliar with the VA Information Resource Center (VIREC) and its mission, we invite you to visit our Web site at: www.virec.research.med.va.gov. On this site, you will find PDF formatted documentation files of the Patient Treatment File (PTF) and VA's Outpatient files (SF, SC, SG, and SE), an acronym list, links to many valuable Web sites, back issues of the *Data Issues Brief*, and many other items of interest. If you have any questions, or would like to know more about the VIREC, please contact us via e-mail at virec@research.hines.med.va.gov or by telephone at (708) 202-2413.

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 on a monthly basis and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Previous releases are posted and available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov>. If you wish to receive future issues direct, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@research.hines.med.va.gov or call 708-202-2413. If you have any suggestions or comments about the *Data Issues Briefs*, please e-mail Diane C. Cowper, Editor, at cowper@research.hines.med.va.gov.