



VA Information Resource Center

Data Issues Brief

September, 2001

1. VA ITC '01 Presentations Available

For those of you who were unable to attend the VA's Information Technology Conference (ITC) this year, the Austin Automation Center (AAC) has a link that provides session presentations and handouts. Visit the Web site at:

Currently, the site only contains a few of the presentations, but will be updated and added to over the next several weeks. One presentation of interest is session 4313, "Next Generation VistA – Health Data Repository: Analysis and Planning for Our Future System," that gives an overview of the Health Data Repository (HDR) highlighted in our August Data Issues Brief.

2. ResDAC Workshops for Researchers Using Medicare Data

The Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC) <<http://resdac.umn.edu>> located at the University of Minnesota, is offering two workshops to help researchers understand and use Medicare data in their research:

- HCFA 101: Introduction to the Use of Medicare Data for Research, October 29-31, 2001.
- HCFA 201: Intermediate Level Medicare Claims Data Analysis, December 5-7, 2001, Atlanta, GA

A complete description of the workshops, as well as the registration information can be found at <<http://resdac.umn.edu>>

3. VHA OI Introduces Quarterly Data Quality Highlights

The VHA Office of Information (OI) has recently added a quarterly newsletter entitled, "Data Quality Highlights" to their list of dissemination products. The newsletter is intended to inform interested individuals across VHA about the data quality initiatives currently underway,

as well as disseminate data quality facts and tips. The most recent issue can be found at: [REDACTED]. Please note that this is an internal VA Web site and that the document is a .pdf file (Adobe Acrobat 4.0 or higher is need to open the document). If you have any comments or suggestions about the newsletter, please contact Elizabeth J. Franchi at elizabeth.franchi2@med.va.gov.

4. **Gauss to Head VA Information and Technology Office**

On August 2, the Senate Veterans' Affairs Committee held a confirmation hearing on the nominations of John A. Gauss, to be Assistant Secretary of Veterans Affairs for Information Technology. Retired Rear Admiral John A. Gauss, who served in the U.S. Navy for 32 years, is the former Commander of the Space and Naval Warfare Systems. As both the Assistant Secretary and Chief Information Officer, Gauss will be the principal advisor to the Secretary of Veterans Affairs on information and technology management. In one of his first official duties, Gauss made a plenary presentation to over 3,000 conference attendees at the VA ITC '01 Conference. In his speech, he highlighted several priorities including program management (capital investment), information security, data architecture, and telecommunications. For more information on Admiral Gauss, please visit the VA's news page and read the official press release at: [REDACTED].

5. **What's New on the VIREC Website** (<http://www.virec.research.va.gov>)

The Summer issue of *VIREC Insights* is now available:

- Cunningham F, Sales M, Valentino M. *The Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM) Database: A Primary Resource for Nation-Wide VA Medication Data*. Hines, IL: VA Information Resource Center; 2001. VIREC Insights, Vol. 2, No. 2. (PDF).

Two historical database information products previously available online have been deleted, but can be made available on request to virec@research.hines.va.gov. These historical documents are:

- Weaver, F, Cowper, D, Nydam, T, Miskevics, S. [VA Guide to Long Term Care Programs and Services](#) Midwest Center for Health Services and Policy Research, Hines VA Hospital Hines, IL., 1997.
- Beattie, M, Swindle, R, Tomko, L. [Department of Veterans Affairs Database Resource Guides](#) , VA Health Services Research and Development Service, Service Directed Research Project #95002. 1996.

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.va.gov>. If you wish to receive future issues direct, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@research.hines.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.