



VA Information Resource Center
Data Issues Brief
March 2000

1. The Austin Automation Center has SAS datasets available that contain the Global Assessment of Function (GAF) scores for both inpatient and outpatient mental health patients (RMTPRD.NPC.SAS.GAFYY). The time period available is 1998-current. These data are collected in response to VHA Directive 97-059, "Instituting Global Assessment of Function Scores in AXIS V for Mental Health Patients." For information about the Directive access the VA intranet site: <http://vaww.va.gov/publ/direc/health/direct/197059.htm>. For more information about the SAS files at Austin, contact the Medical Help Desk at the Austin Automation Center at **512-326-6780**.
2. The members of the Data Quality Workgroup, a VHA-wide workgroup tasked to re-evaluate data quality in VA, have recommended that VA adopt the American Health Information Management Association definition of an encounter. Specifically, the E1384 standard defines the "encounter" as "a professional contact between a patient and a provider who delivers services or is professionally responsible for services delivered to a patient." For more information, contact Diane Cowper, Research representative on the Data Quality Workgroup, at: cowper@research.hines.med.va.gov.
3. Since January 2000, the Austin Automation Center has been documenting all changes to the Inpatient and Outpatient SAS files via an "Audit Trail." This enhancement was instituted in response to a request from the VIREC. The documentation can be found on the AAC Web site:
<http://vaww.aac.va.gov/npcd/audittrail.asp>
4. The Information Office plans to create a Data Registry for all of VA's corporate databases. The first database to be documented is the National Enrollment Database (NED), followed by the National Patient Care Database (NPCD). For a demonstration of the data registry tool, visit:
<http://152.127.160.247/cdrdemo/cdr-home.htm>
5. Two items from the Information Office Top Issues page (<http://vaww.va.gov/vhacio/>) warrant special note:

- a. "At the January APW/VCIOC (Architecture Planning Workgroup/VISN CIO Council) meetings in San Antonio, a paper produced by the System Performance Task Force (<http://152.130.1.210/>) was presented and discussed." This paper outlines the short-term, mid-term, and long-term strategies for changes to the VistA system.
 - b. "An emergency patch (TIU*1.0*92) was released on 1/7/2000 to address the discovery that some medications have been marked as supplies in the Pharmacy Drug file at several facilities. The consequence of this is that any item marked as a supply item would not have been included in the list of medications generated by the new TIU functionality. This patch 1) changed the default action of all TIU medication objects to include supplies; 2) enabled filtering of supplies from TIU medication objects only if specifically requested. The software will display a warning to indicate that supplies have been filtered out, and that medications marked as supplies may have been removed. The Office of Information is continuing to work with Pharmacy Benefits Management staff to formally define and set the defaults to distinguish between medications and supplies."
6. VIREC is sponsoring a workshop at the HSR&D Annual Meeting entitled, "Assessing Health Care Quality Using the VA Decision Support System (dSs): The Future is Now." The workshop will include: (1) Introduction and Overview of dSs by Denise M. Hynes (VIREC); (2) Hemoglobin A1C Compliance as a Measure of Quality: Fundamentals of dSs Use by Roxane Rusch (CIO National Training & Education Office); (3) cost of Hospitalization for Myocardial Infarct by Paul G. Barnett (HERC); and VA Mastectomy Care: Research With Assistance From dSs Site Teams by Patricia A. Murphy (VIREC). The workshop panel will utilize on-line demonstrations, narrative presentation of examples, and handouts. For more information, contact Pat Murphy at: Murphy@research.hines.med.va.gov
7. The dSs Access Policy is in final revision, and the dSs Steering Committee is expected to complete formation of a subcommittee to implement the policy within the near future. Permission has been requested to distribute the Access Policy as part of VIREC's dSs workshop at the HSR&D Annual Meeting in March 2000. For more information, contact Pat Murphy at: Murphy@research.hines.med.va.gov.