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## *VA Information Resource Center*

### *Data Issues Brief*

July 2000

#### 1. National dSs Extracts

A number of National Decision Support System (dSs) Extract datasets are available for FY98, FY99, and FY00 as SAS datasets at the Austin Automation Center (AAC). To obtain access to the National dSs Extracts, researchers need to submit a VA timesharing agreement, a dSs non-disclosure form and, if needed, a completed privacy act statement to their local information security officer. ***It is strongly recommended by the VIREC*** that researchers also contact their local dSs site management team for information about how data are fed into dSs and whether their research question can be answered by data in dSs. Other useful sources for dSs information can be found at:

[http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov/DATABASES/DSS/SRCES\\_OF\\_INFO.HTM](http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov/DATABASES/DSS/SRCES_OF_INFO.HTM).

The datasets currently available at the AAC are:

- (1) All Inpatient discharges (RMTPRD.MED.DSS.FYXX.DISCH);
- (2) All inpatients (discharged or not) for the Fiscal Year by Treating Specialty (RMTPRD.MED.DSS.FYXX. TRTSPC) and
- (3) all Outpatients by Stop Code (RMTPRD.MED.DSS.SEGMENT.FYXX.OUTPT).

Because the outpatient extract for FY 99 contains approximately 88 million records, the data have been segmented into the following files (by VISN):

RMTPRD.MED.DSS.SAS.V1TO5.FY99.OPAT	All clinic stops other than 160 (prescription); VISNs 1 to 5
RMTPRD.MED.DSS.SAS.V1TO5P.FY99.OPAT	160 clinic stops, P indicates Pharmacy VISNs 1 to 5
RMTPRD.MED.SAS.V6TO10.FY99.OPAT	All clinic stops other than 160 VISNs 6 to 10
RMTPRD.MED.SAS.V6TO10P.FY99.OPAT	160 clinic stops, P indicates Pharmacy VISNs 6 to 10
RMTPRD.MED.DSS.SAS.V11TO16.FY99.OPAT	All clinic stops other than 160 (prescription); VISNs 11 to 16
RMTPRD.MED.DSS.SAS.V11TO16P.FY99.OPAT	160 clinic stops, P indicates Pharmacy VISNs 11 to 16
RMTPRD.MED.DSS.SAS.V17TO22.FY99.OPAT	All clinic stops other than 160 (prescription); VISNs 17 to 22
RMTPRD.MED.DSS.SAS.V17TO22P.FY99.OPAT	160 clinic stops, P indicates Pharmacy VISNs 17 to 22

## 2. **DHHS State Profiles Available Online**

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Department of Health and Human Services, has State Profiles -- one for each state and the District of Columbia -- now available online at <http://www.hrsa.gov/stateprofiles/>. The HRSA profiles are user-friendly, providing charts, tables, and critical data on many issues from access to Primary Health Care to the quality of care available for people living with HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. They also count the number of doctors, dentists and nurses and examine their distribution in high-need areas throughout the state.

## 3. **AHSR Fall 2000 Seminar: "Using Federal and State Databases"**

The Academy for Health Services Research and Health Policy, in collaboration with other federal agencies, is offering a series of Fall Seminars in Health Services Research Methods entitled "Using Federal and State Databases." The seminars will be held from October 30 to November 1, 2000 at the Georgetown University Conference Center in Washington, DC.

The first day will focus on data privacy issues. The second day will allow attendees to choose one of three full-day courses, each of which focuses on one of the following topics: the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS), the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS), and an overview of VA Databases. For day three, course topics include the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP), the National Health Care Survey, and Medicare and Medicaid Databases. More information on the content of the seminars, the background of the presenters, and the time of the sessions is available via phone at (202)292-6700 or via the Internet at <http://www.ahsr.org/seminars/fall2000.htm>. Registration for the seminars is also available online.

## 4. **News from the VHA Office of Information**

A *DSS User Conference* is scheduled for August 9-10 in Austin, TX during the Information Technology Conference (ITC). Dr. Jonathan Perlin and Dr. Joan Cummings are keynote speakers. The conference will feature poster presentations, online demonstrations, computer learning lab, opportunities for consultation with technical experts, and discussion sessions with program leaders. For other information on issues from the Office of Information, see their current FLASH report at: [REDACTED].

In other OI news, *Gary A. Christopherson* has been named the new VHA Chief Information Officer (CIO). Mr. Christopherson's previous position was as the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs. In that role, he managed policy, the Defense Health Program budget and performance for the Military Health System, including the \$15 billion TRICARE health care system and force health protection.

**5. Techniques for Handling Bias in Health Services Outcomes Research National Conference** will be held November 7-9, 2000, at the J.W. Marriott in Houston, Texas. This conference is supported by: Department of Veterans Affairs, Health Services Research & Development Service, Pfizer, Inc., Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality, and Baylor College of Medicine, Department of Medicine, Section of Health Services Research. For more information visit the Web site: <http://www.hsrh.houston.med.va.gov/NationalConference>.

## 6. **HQ Library Reading Room**

The VA Headquarters Library Reading Room contains numerous journals that are of interest to researchers. This useful Web site has articles categorized under 5 headings: Business (e.g., Fortune, The Economist), Current Events (e.g., New York Times, Washington Post), Information

Technology (e.g., Topics in Health Information Management, PC World), Health Administration (e.g., Health Affairs, Health Care Management Review) and Medicine (e.g., American Journal of Public Health, Geriatrics, Journals of Gerontology, Public Health Reports). Visit this Web site at: <http://vaww.va.gov/health/library/hqlibrary/proquest/readroom.htm>

## **7. New Version of PubMed Released**

PubMed – the National Library of Medicine’s search service that provides free and easy access to MEDLINE, PreMEDLINE, and the National Center for Biotechnology’s Entrez databases – has been redesigned. New features include the following:

- Improved access to all search features
- New PubMed home page
- New features bar, including limits, index, history, and clipboard features
- New help features
- Links to MEDLINE*plus*

The new version of PubMed is available online at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/PubMed/>. Additional information can be obtained from the January-March 2000 edition of “NLM Newslines.” Any comments or questions on the updated PubMed can be e-mailed to [pubmednew@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov](mailto:pubmednew@ncbi.nlm.nih.gov).

*Data Issues Briefs* are developed 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. *Data Issues Briefs* are produced on a monthly basis and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Earlier issues 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](mailto:virec@research.hines.med.va.gov) or call 708-202-2413.