VA Information Resource Center
Data Issues Brief
August 2000

1.   **Human Subject Protection and Financial Conflicts of Interest.**

A conference was held August 15-16, 2000 at the National Institutes for Health (NIH) in Bethesda, MD in order to: (1) implement one of the Secretary's five initiatives to strengthen human subject protection in clinical research; (2) remind participants of current PHS/FDA regulations, guidelines and guidance through documents and presentations; (3) present examples of how the issue of financial conflict of interest is dealt with at the level of institutions, IRBs, and clinical investigators; (4) receive public comments on questions posed in the *Federal Register* announcing the conference; (5) receive public comments on the NIH guidance on Financial Conflicts of Interest; and (6) provide information for the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to develop more useful and detailed guidance to implement current regulatory requirements. For more information, visit the web site:
http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/sp/coi/index.htm

2.   **Health Information Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)**

The August 17, 2000 edition of the *Federal Register* contains a complete copy of the Final Rule. To obtain a PDF file of this document, go to the following Web site:
http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/admnsimp/final/index.htm. This final rule will become effective in 60 days, unless Congress intervenes. The implementation of these rules must occur within 2 years and 60 days, except for certain healthcare plans that have an additional year for implementation. Additional information is also available at: http://www.aspe.hhs.gov/admnsimp.

3.   **Rural Health Research Agenda**

The National Rural Health Association, the federal Office of Rural Health, the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, the Department of Veterans Affairs, and the U.S. Center for Mental Health Services met for a two-day conference August 13-15 to discuss the direction of a national research agenda and national policy formation for rural health issues. Specific topics in the breakout sessions were: Medicare Financing, Medicaid Financing, Quality of Care in Rural Areas, Rural Public Health, Hospital and Community Systems, Health Professionals, Access to Services, Behavioral Health and Long-term care. Martha Bryan, Ph.D., the HSR&D Assistant Director, Scientific Review provided agency comments on behalf of the VA. To find out more about the conference, contact the National Rural Health Association at dc@nrharural.org (e-mail) or call (202) 232-6200.

4. *Health, United States, 2000 With Adolescent Health Chartbook* Released

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) has released its 24th report on the health status of the Nation – *Health, United States, 2000 With Adolescent Health Chartbook*. This resource reports on national trends in health statistics on topics including birth and death rates, infant mortality, and life expectancy, to mention a few. A complete copy of the current report, as well as reports dating back to 1993, is available online at www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/pubs/pubd/hus/hus.htm. Questions on *Health, United States, 2000 With Adolescent Health Chartbook* should be directed to the Data Dissemination Branch, National Center for Health Statistics at 301-458-INFO.

5. News From the Office of Information

A "One-VA Smart Card" for the veteran that will be used by VHA, VBA, and NCA is being planned at the direction of Acting Secretary Gober. The current plan targets Proof of Concept Demonstration (August 31, 2000), Initial One-VISN Implementation (January 2001), and National Rollout (January 2002). Functionality will include express registration and availability of eligibility and emergency medical information. The One VA smart card will be a portable card that will contain administrative and clinical data on the veteran. It will allow administrative and clinical personnel, with appropriate security clearance, access to the veteran's electronic files regardless of geographic location. One VA card will enable the veteran access to information through a web-enabled system to make and/or change clinic appointments, as well as change specific administrative information, at medical centers, regional offices, community based clinics and other kiosk locations. Hedy Towan, OI Implementation and Training Services, Telephone: 303-399-8020 X3744, E-Mail: hedy.towan@med.va.gov, has been named Project Manager. A project web page has been established at: http://152.128.1.90/proj/onevacard/.

6. New Veteran Population Figures To Be Released

At a breakout session during the Information Technology Conference (ITC'00) in Austin, TX on August 8, 2000, Dr. Stephen Meskin, VA's Chief Actuary, announced that new veteran population estimates and projections would be available by September 30, 2000. Veteran population figures have not been updated since 1993. To view the PowerPoint presentation, go to the Austin Automation Center (AAC) Web page at: ▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇▇ and select presentation material (option 3) under the Post-Conference Information. Ms. Pat O'Neal and Dr. Steve Meskin's presentation is number 4456. VIReC will continue to follow the progress of this initiative and report when and where the information will be available to researchers.