

VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:

1. VA Diagnostic Cost Group Files Available at AAC

Diagnostic Cost Group (DCG) SAS Files are now available at the Austin Automation Center (AAC) using the latest DCG release (Risk Smart 2.1.1) beginning with fiscal year 1998 (FY98) and through FY06. These data have been produced by the Management Science Group at the VHA Support Services Center (VSSC). The DCG risk score, based on age, gender and diagnoses, is cost-based and provides a relative measure for risk adjustment. Using International Classification of Disease 9th Revision (ICD-9) codes, diagnoses are converted into hierarchical condition categories which are in turn translated into a predicted cost. An individual's relative risk score is computed from the ratio of the person's predicted cost compared to the average per person cost of a given population. For more information about these files contact Sophie Lo at the Management Science Group at Sophie.Lo@va.gov.

2. VA Dementia Registry Summary Tables Now Available

The VHA Office of Geriatrics and Extended Care, in collaboration with the VHA Allocation Resource Center (ARC), is pleased to announce the availability of a set of Summary Tables from a new VA Dementia Registry. The summary tables include FY04 data on selected *demographics, service use, and costs* for VA patients with dementia at the VA *National and VISN levels*. The data, along with a Methods Report, are available on the ARC Intranet Web site (address given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*). For further information about these tables contact susan.cooley@va.gov.

VA Dementia Projections, announced in 2004, are VA projections of *dementia prevalence and incidence through 2022*, based on national rates of dementia applied to the veteran population. Data at the *National, VISN, and State levels* are included, for three segments of the veteran population: the general veteran population; the enrolled population; and the patient population. These data are available on the Web site of the Office of the Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Policy and Planning (ADUSH): www.va.gov/vhareorg/reports.htm.

3. Means Test Thresholds for Calendar Year 2007

VHA Directive 2006-064, dated December 19, 2006, revises the Means Test Thresholds, Medicare Deductible Rate, and Child Income Exclusion for calendar year 2007. For full details, see http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1513.

4. Pressure Ulcers to be Reported and Tracked

VHA Directive 1006-066, dated December 22, 2006 outlines a policy for reporting and tracking interventions and clinical outcomes associated with the care of patients (including Spinal Cord Injury) or nursing home residents with pressure ulcers. VA Nursing Outcome Database indicators will be similar to those currently utilized by the External Peer Review Program (EPRP) and EPRP roll-up will be used until these indicators can be fully implemented electronically. For more information, see http://www1.va.gov/vhapublications/ViewPublication.asp?pub_ID=1516.

MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS:

5. VIREC Presentations at VA HSR&D National Meeting

The following presentations by VIREC staff will be made at the VA's Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) National Meeting (February 21-23) in Washington DC.

Workshop: *Combining Veterans' Health Care Data from VHA and Medicare: Methodological Issues and Research Examples*

- o Mallin K; Koelling KA; Jia H; Kwon S; Stroupe KT
- o 10:00 – 11:30 am, Friday, February 23

Breakfast Session: *VA Information Resource Center (VIREC): New Tools for VA Research*

- o Koelling KA; Bates J; Perrin MA; Stevens JM
- o 7:00 – 8:00 am, Friday, February 23

The detailed agenda is available on the Internet at

<http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/meetings/2007/agenda.cfm>.

6. ResDAC To Hold Medicare and Medicaid Data Training in La Jolla CA

The Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC) will host two upcoming workshops in La Jolla, CA directed at users of data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS): (1) CMS 101: Introduction to the Use of Medicare Data for Research will be held from February 5-7, 2007. This workshop provides important background about the use of Medicare data for researchers. (2) CMS 102: Conducting Research with Medicaid Claims Data will be held from February 19-21, 2007. This course will provide information on the new Medicaid Analytic Extract (MAX) files and tools and resources that support research using Medicaid administrative data. For detailed information about both courses being held in La Jolla go to the ResDAC Web site: <http://www.resdac.umn.edu/>

CALL FOR PAPERS AND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

7. American Journal of Public Health Calls for Manuscripts on Health Care for Veterans

The *American Journal of Public Health (AJPH)* intends to publish a collection of manuscripts on Health Care for Veterans. They are interested in soliciting data-driven research, meta-analyses, and review or commentary manuscripts concerning health care for veterans. Emphasis will be directed at manuscripts that examine the subject in the context of the national effort to reform health care and to improve its quality and equity. To be considered for inclusion in this theme issue, manuscripts must be submitted by April 1, 2007. For more information go to the AJPH Web site: <http://www.ajph.org/>.

8. 2007 Database/Methods & Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminars

Due to the VA HSR&D National Meeting, no February Database and Methods or Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar sessions sponsored by VIREC are scheduled. Future session topics will soon be available on the HSR&D website at:

http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/upcoming.cfm

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO DISSEMINATE TO COLLEAGUES! *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 monthly. All issues are available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/>. If you wish to receive email notification of future issues or have any suggestions or comment about the *Data Issues Briefs*, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@va.gov or call (708) 202-2413.