VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

DATA ISSUES BRIEF **OCTOBER 2007**

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CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE:

VIReC UPDATES:

1. VA Researchers Should Use VIReC INTRAnet Web Site
VIReC has recently realized that many VA researchers are unaware that they should be using the VIReC INTRAnet Web site instead of the VIReC INTERnet Web site. VIReC maintains its INTERnet Web site mainly to serve VA researchers based in academic settings, researchers in other government agencies, and researchers outside of government service who may be interested or enticed to perform research focused on veterans' issues. VIReC maintains its INTRAnet Web site to serve the needs of researches within the VA. The VIReC INTRAnet Web site contains all of the content of the VIReC INTERnet Web site, plus additional content. For example, the VIReC INTERnet Web site redacts all references to VA INTRAnet links while the VIReC INTRAnet Web site provides these links.

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2. New FY06 Inpatient and Outpatient MedSAS Research User Guides
VIReC has recently published on its VA Intranet site new (fiscal year 2006 [FY06])) research user guides (RUGs) for the Inpatient and Outpatient Medical SAS (MedSAS) files at the Corporate Franchise Data Center (CFD) in Austin (formerly known as the Austin Automation Center or AAC). A new major feature of the FY06 Outpatient MedSAS RUG is information regarding the Inpatient Encounters datasets which record (outpatient) clinic activity during inpatient stays. Also included in both MedSAS RUGs is a section responding to frequently asked questions.

VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS:
3. Final FY07 MedSAS Files Available at End of October
The National Patient Care Database (NPCD) office expects the final FY07 Inpatient and Outpatient MedSAS datasets to be available to researchers by October 31. The Decision Support Service (DSS) office is not scheduling the final DSS Clinical National Data Extract files to be available until sometime in January or February 2008. For more information go the the NPCD VA Intranet site (the address is given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

4. Weekend Access to FY07 Outpatient MedSAS Datasets Terminated During October
NPCD requests that researchers not submit jobs for the FY07 SAS Outpatient datasets over weekends until NPCD produces the final FY07 MedSAS datasets. During October, CFD will terminate weekend jobs that call any of the SAS "SF" or "SE" files.

5. Vital Status File Update (Re-build) Notice to Users
The CFD, formerly the AAC, discovered that the last two builds of the Vital Status SAS datasets in April and July of this year did not include death date contributions to the Vital Status File from the Compensation and Pension (CP) Mini file. To make amends for this, the July update was rebuilt on 9/13/07. This update added 521,226 new unique CPMini source records to the Vital Status Master file, 510,769 of which were the result of the "Death Payee" records from this CP file, for a current total number of CPMini source records in the Vital Status Master file of 3,553,668. The update yielded an additional 494,447 records in the Vital Status Mini file that have a "Best Date of Death" source from the CPMini file. As of the September rebuild, the total number of unique records in the Vital Status Master file from all sources is 21,067,619.

6. Review of Real SSN Access Privileges
On October 1, 2007 NPCD began a review of all CFD (formerly AAC) users with national real SSN privileges. Please be aware that if you have a national real SSN account you may be requested to provide supporting documentation. National real SSN function task codes can no longer be assigned by local information security officers (ISOs) and are now assigned at the CFD. Documentation requirements for national real SSN access for research will be posted on the VA Intranet (the address is given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*).

7. OEF/OIF Cohort Data Available Online
The Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) Basic Demographics Cube and Total Cohort Cost Report are now available on the VHA Support Service Center's (VSSC) Intranet Web site (the address is given in the Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief*). These cubes draw data from Health Eligibility Center enrollment files, the Planning Systems Support Group zip file, VHA workload files and Department of Defense (DOD) data provided by the VA's Environmental Epidemiology Service. To view report information at the person level, permission for SSN level access and a specific User ID and Password are required. The Automated Customer Registration Service (ACRS) point of contact at your site, usually your Information Security Officer, should be able to assist you with your request.

8. OEF/OIF Roster File Contact Information
Researchers can apply for access to the OEF/OIF Roster File through Han K. Kang, Dr.P.H., Director, Environmental Epidemiology Service, han.kang@va.gov. Release of the data is based on a need to know and minimum information necessary for the project basis. You will be required to produce Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Research & Development (R&D) approval documents of a research protocol that specifies the use of the Defense Department's Defense Manpower Data Center data, documentation of Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) waiver, and a data transfer agreement between the Environmental Epidemiology Service and your office. Contact Dr. Kang for more information.

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EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:
9. October Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar
Hayden B. Bosworth, PhD is presenting a cyber seminar on Tuesday, October 16 entitled "Hypertension Self-Management: The Use of Telemedicine as an Intervention Tool." Dr. Bosworth is Associate Director of the Center for Health Services Research in Primary Care at Durham VA Medical Center. He is a Research Professor in the Department of Medicine, the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, and the School of Nursing at Duke University Medical Center. Participants are welcome to join the session on a "first come, first serve" basis. The Cyber Seminars on Clinical Informatics, sponsored by VIReC, take place at 12 pm ET on the third Tuesday of each month. Information can be found at: http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/catalog.cfm. For further questions contact Laurel Nevinslong at laurel.nevinslong@va.gov.

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CONFERENCES:
10. American Medical Informatics Association Annual Symposium November 10-14, 2007
The American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) Annual Symposium will be held in Chicago IL November 10-14, 2007. The theme of this year's symposium is "Biomedical and Health Informatics: From Foundations to Applications to Policy." As stated on their Web site, "The spectrum of topics includes basic information science, knowledge modeling, technology applications, design strategies, health information exchange and communications, public policy, regional and international developments, standards, bioinformatics and genomics, and more." More information can be found on the Internet at http://www.amia.org/meetings/f07/.

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