



1. Submission Deadline March 12, 2003, for AMIA Conference

Proposals for presentations at the American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) 2003 Symposium are due March 12, 2003. The Symposium, entitled "Biomedical and Health Informatics: From Foundations to Applications," will occur November 8-12, 2003, in Washington, DC. For full information and online submission instructions, visit the AMIA Symposium Web site at <http://www.amia.org/meetings/annual/current/main.html>.

2. VHA Research & Development HIPAA Privacy Rule Guidance Distributed

With a February 12, 2003, memorandum from Nelda Wray, MD, Chief, VHA Research and Development (R&D) Service, VA researchers and research administrators received a draft version of R&D guidance for implementing the requirements of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy Rule. The guidance document that was distributed explains the requirements of the Privacy Rule that affect researchers and discusses how VHA researchers can make sure they are in compliance. The R&D HIPAA guidance is available on the Internet at <http://www.va.gov/resdev/fr/hipaa.cfm>. VIREC staff person Patricia Lynch Watts, currently on detail to the R&D Central Office, is contact person for questions about the Guidance Document. She can be reached at 202-254-0281 or via patricia.l.watts@hq.med.va.gov.

3. DSS National Lab Test Extract Datasets Available

A DSS National Data Extract named "Lab Test Extract" is available at the Austin Automation Center. Ten SAS datasets comprise the Lab Test Extract: five reporting laboratory tests performed for inpatients and five reporting laboratory tests performed for outpatients. These are patient-level datasets, sorted by station, patient's scrambled Social Security Number, and date of laboratory test service. Research user documentation of the datasets will be developed by VIREC, and the availability of documentation on the Center's Web site will be announced in a future *Data Issues Brief*. Names of the SAS datasets and instructions for requesting access currently may be viewed on the VHA Intranet Web site of the VISN Support Services Center (<http://klfmenu.med.va.gov/>) or may be requested from the VIREC Help Desk via e-mail (virec@research.hines.va.gov).

4. 2003 VA Information Technology Conference Announced

There will be a VA Information Technology Conference (ITC) August 4-7, 2003, at the Austin Convention Center. The conference will run concurrently with the National CIO Conference of the VA Office of Information and Technology. Registration for the ITC is tentatively scheduled to begin June 10, 2003. For full information, see the ITC Web site on the VA Intranet ([REDACTED]).

5. February-March *DSS Matters* Newsletter Issued

The February-March 2003 issue of the Decision Support System (DSS) newsletter reports on how DSS will be used in the 2003 Veterans Equitable Resource Allocation (VERA) process to calculate Pro-Rated Persons, identify high-cost patients, and help set rates for ten new VERA price groups. The newsletter is available on the DSS program's VHA Intranet Web site ([REDACTED]) via the link "News and Events."

6. Interactive Reports Available From Office of Quality & Performance

The VHA Office of Quality and Performance (OQP) has a re-designed Intranet Web site with an online, interactive report capability for managers and others seeking quarterly VISN- or national-level data on VA performance. This "Executive Briefing Book" system can be accessed via the link "Data Consolidation Initiative" on the Web site home page (see [REDACTED]).

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 on a monthly basis and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Previous releases are posted and available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov>. If you wish to receive future issues directly or have any suggestions or comment about the *Data Issues Briefs*, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@research.hines.va.gov or call (708) 202-2413.