VIReC RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

Data Issues Brief   April 2003

1. VA Issues Notice of Privacy Practices Effective April 14, 2003

The Notice of Privacy Practices issued by the Veterans Administration includes statements to patients about possible use of their information for research purposes. The document is available on the Internet at http://www.va.gov/publ/direc/health/notice/ib10-163.pdf

2. VIReC Funded for VA Medicare Data Merge

The VA Information Resource Center (VIReC) has received notice of approval and funding for its proposal to acquire Medicare enrollment and claims data for veterans and to link the Medicare data with VA health care utilization data. Procedures are under development for disseminating the data to VA researchers with approved projects. VIReC will soon announce the availability of the 1999 merged VA and Medicare data, and a second announcement will follow concerning availability of 2000 and 2001 data. Questions can be sent to the VIReC Help Desk via e-mail (virec@research.hines.va.gov).

3. Upcoming Workshops on Medicare and Medicaid Data

The Research Data Assistance Center (ResDAC) is offering two workshops at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis. CMS 101, "Introduction to the use of Medicare data for research," will be presented May 14-16, 2003; CMS 102, "Conducting research with Medicaid claims data," will be available June 2-4, 2003. CMS 101 is vital background for researchers who have not yet used Medicare data and plan to use the merged VA-Medicare data that will soon be available through VIReC. Full information about ResDAC and the workshops is on the Internet at http://www.resdac.umn.edu/Index.asp.

4. AHRQ Workshop on HIPAA Privacy Rule

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) and AcademyHealth are offering a workshop, "Playing by New Rules: Privacy and Health Services Research" on April 29 in Washington, DC. The workshop is intended to educate members of the health services research community about its responsibilities and obligations under HIPAA and demonstrate practical approaches to implementing the privacy rule. Visit http://www.academyhealth.org/privacy/ for registration and additional information.

5. New Issue of the *DSS Matters* Newsletter

The April-May 2003 issue of the DSS Program Office newsletter reports the beginning of a strategic planning and reorganization process. One of a number of program objectives is "Assuring data quality, access, efficiency and timeliness." The newsletter is available at the DSS Web site page for "News and Events" on the VHA Intranet at ███████████████████████████████ or from the VIReC Help Desk via e-mail (virec@research.hines.va.gov).
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