



1. VHA Medical SAS Event Dataset Changes

Beginning with FY2003, the VHA Medical SAS Event Dataset variables for Provider Type (PROV1-PROV10) have been changed from numeric to character variables, and the associated permanent SAS format has been changed from "XPROV" to "\$PERCLS." The new format has significantly longer, more descriptive definitions. Users of the Provider Type variables across years will need to revise their programming statements to reflect this change in variable type and print format for FY2003 and the variable type and permanent print format for earlier years as described in VIREC documentation (<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/RGFY2000.htm>). Notification of the FY2003 change was received by VIREC from the National Patient Care Database (NPCD) team at the Austin Automation Center. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this change, please contact the VIREC Help Desk at virec@research.hines.va.gov or (708) 202-2413.

2. ITC Will Include VIREC Presentations

The 2003 VA Information Technology Conference (ITC) will include two presentations by VIREC staff: "Informatics Strategies to Support Evidence Based Practice" and "VIREC—How It Fosters Best Practices Using VA Data for Research." The ITC will be held August 4-7, 2003, at the Austin Convention Center in Austin, Texas. Full details of the meeting, including the agenda and registration instructions, are available at the VA Intranet site [REDACTED].

3. AHRQ July Conference on Translating Research Into Practice

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) is sponsoring a conference July 22-24, 2003, in Washington, DC, on the topic "Translating Research Into Practice: What's Working? What's Missing? What's Next?" Speakers will include VHA Deputy Undersecretary for Health Jonathan Perlin, M.D., Ph.D. Full information, including the conference agenda, complete listing of speakers, and presentation submission procedures, is available at the conference Web site: <http://www.blsmeetings.net/TRIP/>.

4. No Fall 2003 AcademyHealth Seminars on "Using Federal and State Databases"

With the decision of AcademyHealth to not offer its fall seminars entitled "Using Federal and State Databases," VIREC lost its usual contribution of a seminar on using VA data, at least for the fall of 2003. VIREC remains committed to meeting the training needs of researchers using VA data, and is seeking alternative methods of doing so. Researchers are encouraged to contact VIREC (virec@research.hines.va.gov) to communicate their specific training requirements, and VIREC will strive to coordinate support. The Academy is sponsoring other methods workshops in conjunction with its June research meeting, for which information is available at organization's Web site (<http://www.academyhealth.org/seminars/arm2003/index.htm>).

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.