



1. Latest VIREC Research User Guides for VHA Medical SAS Datasets

VIREC is pleased to announce that its Research User Guides for the FY2001 and FY2002 VHA Medical SAS Datasets (listed below) are available in Beta testing on the VIREC Web site

(<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/>).

- *VIREC Research User Guide: FY2002 VHA Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets* (PDF, 925KB)
- *VIREC Research User Guide: FY2002 VHA Medical SAS Outpatient Datasets* (PDF, 632KB)
- *VIREC Research User Guide: Select Variable Frequencies From The FY2002 VHA Medical SAS Datasets* (PDF, 968KB)

Enhancements in content and usability, including numerous bookmarks and hyperlinks, make the new guides more user-friendly than previous editions. *Select Frequencies From The FY2001 VHA Medical SAS Datasets* will be posted on the VIREC Web site for Beta testing in June. Suggestions and comments or reports of technical difficulties or errors encountered during the test period should be directed to Phil Colin at colin@research.hines.med.va.gov or 708-202-8387, ext. 27042.

2. New Race and Ethnicity Variables Added To VHA Medical SAS Inpatient Main Dataset

Beginning with FY2003, the VHA Medical SAS Inpatient Main Dataset reflects new data on patient race and ethnicity being collected in VISTA in response to the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's revision of Statistical Policy Directive No. 15, Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Statistics and Administrative Reporting (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/fedreg/ombdir15.html>). The Inpatient Main Dataset variable named RACE, described in the *VIREC Research User Guide: FY2002 Medical SAS Inpatient Dataset*, will continue to be available as the new information is collected.

The new data comprise up to six reports of race per patient (variables RACE1–RACE6) and one report of ethnicity (variable ETHNIC). Both the race and ethnicity variables are coded to indicate also the means of data collection (e.g., White-Self-identified, White-Observer, White-Proxy, etc.; Hispanic-Self-Identified, Not Hispanic-Proxy, etc.). Plans to make these changes in the outpatient datasets as well are underway. If you have any questions regarding these changes please contact the VIREC Help Desk at virec@research.hines.va.gov or (708) 202-2413.

3. Results of 2001 National Survey of Veterans On Web

Both a final report and a methodology report of the 2001 National Survey of Veterans are now available on the Internet at <http://www.va.gov/vetdata/SurveyResults/index.htm>. The telephone survey collected data on socio-demographic and economic characteristics, military background, health status, VA and non-VA benefit usage, anticipated burial plans, and veterans' information sources regarding VA benefits. This was the fifth National Survey of Veterans.


4. New Information for Prospective Users of Immunology Case Registry Data

The VHA Center for Quality Management in Public Health (CQM) has posted on its VA Intranet Web site information for prospective users of the Immunology Case Registry (ICR). This includes a listing of variables, the Data Access Policy, and forms for requesting data access. The information addresses use of ICR data by both VA and non-VA researchers. For full information, see the CQM Intranet Web site or contact the CQM at (650) 849-0365 or VIREC (virec@research.hines.va.gov or 708-202-2413).

5. Latest Issue of *VIREC Insights* Published

The [Spring 2003 issue of *VIREC Insights*](#), entitled “The Johns Hopkins Adjusted Clinical Groups (ACGs) Case-Mix System,” can be downloaded from the VIREC Web site (www.virec.research.va.gov). This issue describes a risk adjustment methodology currently available at the VA Austin Automation Center. It was authored by Amy K. Rosen, Ph.D., Priti Trivedi, M.H.A., Megan Amuan, M.P.H., and Maria Montez, M.S.

6. New Issue of Data Quality Newsletter Published

The May 2003 issue of *Data Quality Highlights*, published by Information Assurance Data Quality Program of the VHA Office of Information, is available at the Program’s Intranet Web site: . Requests for copies of the newsletter can be addressed to Elizabeth Franchi, the Data Quality Program Coordinator (Elizabeth.franchi2@med.va.gov).

7. AHRQ Releases SPSS Software for Patient Safety Indicators

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) announces the availability of the AHRQ Patient Safety Indicators software in SPSS format. The SPSS software is now available for download, free of charge, from the AHRQ Quality Indicators Web site (www.qualityindicators.ahrq.gov). The Patient Safety Indicators are the third module of the AHRQ Quality Indicators (QIs), which are measures of health care quality based on readily available hospital inpatient administrative data. The Patient Safety Indicators (PSIs) are a new tool to help health system leaders identify potentially preventable complications and iatrogenic events occurring during hospitalization.

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.