



1. AAC Updates DRG Medical SAS Dataset Permanent Format Descriptions

The Austin Automation Center (AAC) has updated the permanent SAS format descriptions associated with the Diagnosis Related Group (DRG) variables found in the Medical SAS Inpatient datasets. These changes, which were implemented in July 2003, were made to match the DRG descriptions found in the software that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) uses to group ICD-9-CM diagnosis codes. The AAC purchases this software from 3M Health Information Systems. For FY2003 data, the AAC is using version 20.0.

2. VA Office of Research & Development Issues Call for Abstracts

The VA Office of Research and Development (ORD) is seeking abstracts for poster and oral presentations, panels, and workshops for the VA ORD National Meeting to be held in Washington, D.C., March 9-12, 2004. Deadline for abstracts is October 17, 2003; applicants will be notified of decisions by the selection committee by December 1, 2003. The full, three-page announcement is available at http://www.va.gov/resdev/fr/Call_for_Abstracts.pdf.

3. DSS Matters Reports on Research Using DSS

The August-September 2003 issue of the DSS Program Office newsletter, *DSS Matters*, includes a report of research utilizing DSS data conducted by Health Services Research & Development investigators Pamela Duncan and Dean Reker. "Costs and Outcomes of Post-Stroke Rehabilitation Care" was an 11-VAMC, two-year observational study. The newsletter also includes a report on the DSS Program Assessment being conducted, description of pre-defined reports available using the DSS National Data Extract of pharmacy data, and results of the FY2003 standardization audit of DSS production databases. *DSS Matters* is available on the VA Intranet at the DSS Web site, [REDACTED].

4. AMIA Call for Reviewers

The American Medical Informatics Association (AMIA) is soliciting for reviewers to review and critique submissions for the Medinfo Congress 2004. Reviews will be conducted for submissions in the areas of bio-informatics, clinical informatics, education and training, human information processing and organizational behavior, imaging and signal analysis, innovative technologies in health care, knowledge management, nursing informatics, organizational issues, patient record, and public health informatics. Reviews will be needed for approximately 4 – 5 papers per reviewer, with the bulk of the reviews occurring in October 2003. Information is available at <http://www.medinfo2004.org/>, and registration at <http://www.medinfo2004.org/reviewer/signup.asp>.

5. Academy Health Announces Cyber Seminars

AcademyHealth will provide a three-session series of cyber seminars on the topic "Advances in Methods for Measuring Health Outcomes from the Patient Point of View" on October 23, November 21, and December 11, 2003. Monthly seminars for January-April also have been announced. Deadline for

registration at a discount rate is September 26. For full details, see <http://www.academyhealth.org/cyberseminars/live/index.htm>.

6. Information Technology Conference Handouts On VA Intranet

Session handouts from the VA Information Technology Conference (ITC) in August 2003 are now available on the ITC Web site. Conference organizers note that they are receiving additional electronic files of handouts daily, so it is worth checking the site regularly for a while. The full conference agenda also is available online. See the VA Intranet site at [REDACTED].

PLEASE FEEL FREE TO DISSEMINATE TO COLLEAGUES! *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 monthly and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Previous releases are 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.

