



RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

Data Issues Brief

April/ May 2010

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VIREC UPDATES

- 1. VIReC Unique Patient-level & Record-level Frequencies from Decision Support System National Data Extracts**

VIReC computes variable frequencies from select VA datasets for use in proposal development, checking totals when managing and analyzing data, and other research activities. VIReC has posted unique patient-level frequencies for select variables in the Decision Support System (DSS) Laboratory (LAB), Laboratory Results (LAR), Pharmacy (PHA), and Radiology (RAD) National Data Extracts (NDEs) on its web site. Fiscal year 2007-2009 tabulations by number of unique patients for variable values in combined inpatient and outpatient records are available in a Microsoft Excel workbook. Updates to VIReC's record-level frequencies for select LAB, LAR, PHA, and RAD NDEs are also available. For access to both sets of tabulations, researchers may visit the VIReC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/DSS/DSSdocumentation.htm>.

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VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

2. VSSC Changes Data Source for Reporting Inpatient Workload

The Veterans Health Administration Support Service Center (VSSC) has changed its data source for reporting inpatient workload, which includes average daily census, bed days of care, and occupancy rates. Previously, data were pulled from the VHA Work Measurement (VWM) database (formerly, the Automated Management Information System or AMIS) that is manually populated by medical center staff. Instead, VSSC is now using Patient Treatment File (PTF) Treating Specialty data combined with a VistA census data supplement. Since the Treating Specialty data is populated through an automated, direct feed from VistA. Together, these data sources are expected to provide more comprehensive, accurate, and current information. While AMIS inpatient workload data is still accessible in the VSSC Bed Cube, this information will be removed over time. Researchers can access updated inpatient workload reports on the VA Intranet VSSC Web site. For further information, contact the VSSC Help Desk. (See VA Intranet version of this Data Issues Brief for Web site addresses.)

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3. Decision Support Office New Points of Contact

The Decision Support Office (DSO) has posted new points of contact for the most commonly requested Decision Support System (DSS) services. These services include providing information on when a report or data cube will be refreshed, answering content questions about the clinical and financial data cubes, providing information on updates to VISN data marts, creating customized financial data files, and ad hoc financial queries. The points of contact and their contact information are available on the VA Intranet DSS Web site. (See VA Intranet version of this Data Issues Brief for Web site address.)

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4. Computerized Patient Records System Wiki on CPRS Functionality

The Computerized Patient Records System (CPRS) Tips and Tricks Wiki is a new resource for VHA researchers whose projects involve VA information technology and who want to learn more about the functionalities of CPRS and related software packages. The wiki is a Web site that allows providers and Clinical Applications Coordinators to co-author a knowledge source on CPRS. VHA providers are invited to share tips on saving time, increasing efficiency, and the functionalities of CPRS. The CPRS Tips and Tricks Wiki is accessible on the VHA Intranet Web site. (See VA Intranet version of this Data Issues Brief for Web site address.)

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EDUCATION

5. VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyberseminar Series

Clinical Reminders to Improve Care of Patients with Reduced Cardiac Function

Paul Heidenreich, MD, MS

Tuesday, May 18 – 12:00 pm (ET)

Paul Heidenreich, MD, MS, will present *Clinical Reminders to Improve Care of Patients with Reduced Cardiac Function* on May 18, 2010, at 12:00 pm ET. Dr. Heidenreich is a Director of the Chronic Heart Failure Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) and is a staff cardiologist at the VA Palo Alto Healthcare System. Dr. Heidenreich is an active health services researcher with research interests in the epidemiology and the quality of care of patients with heart disease.

VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyberseminars take place on the third Tuesday of each month at 12:00 pm (ET) via LiveMeeting. These seminars are also available as on-demand, archived presentations. Researchers may visit the VIReC Web site to access an archived presentation or to register for this seminar at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/EducationResources/Seminars/Cyberseminars.htm>. E-mail questions to VIReC's Clinical Informatics Cyberseminar Coordinator, Joanne Stevens at Joanne.Stevens@va.gov.

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6. VIReC Database and Methods Cyberseminar Series

Assessing VA Health Care Use: Outpatient

Timothy E. Weddle, PhD, MBA, BSIOE

Monday, June 7 – 1:00 pm (ET)

Timothy E. Weddle, PhD, MBA, BSIOE, will present *Assessing VA Health Care Use: Outpatient* on Monday, June 7, 2010. Dr. Weddle is a Center Associate Director and Center Co-principal Investigator of the VA Information Resource Center (VIReC) at Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital, Hines, IL. Dr. Weddle is an Affiliate Research Assistant Professor for the Department of Sociology, Loyola University Chicago, Chicago, IL.

VIReC Database and Methods Cyberseminars take place on the first Monday of each month at 1:00 pm (ET) via LiveMeeting. These seminars are also available as on-demand, archived presentations. Researchers may visit the VIReC Web site to register for this seminar or to access an archived presentation

at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/EducationResources/Seminars/Cyberseminars.htm>.

E-mail questions to VIReC's Database and Methods Cyberseminar Coordinator, Melissa Brown at Melissa.Brown3@va.gov.

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RESOURCES

7. Healthcare Cost & Utilization Project Supplemental Files for Revisit Analyses are Now Available

Researchers studying healthcare costs and utilization for hospital-based services may be interested in the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) Supplemental Files for Revisit Analyses recently released by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). These discharge-level files contain synthetic person-level identifiers as well as a timing variable. Researchers may use the Revisit Analyses files in studies tracking patients across time and hospital settings in HCUP State Inpatient, State Ambulatory Surgery, and State Emergency Department Databases. Further information on the HCUP Supplemental Files for Revisit Analyses is available on the HCUP Web site at <http://www.hcup-us.ahrq.gov/toolssoftware/revisit/revisit.jsp>.

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CALLS FOR PAPERS

8. Calls for Papers from *Translational Behavioral Medicine: Practice, Policy, Research*

Translational Behavioral Medicine: Practice, Policy, Research (TBM), a new Society of Behavioral Medicine (SBM) journal, focuses on setting behavioral research into practice with an emphasis on implementation. The first print issue of the journal, which is managed by Springer Science+Business Media, will be published in March of 2011. *TBM* has issued two calls for papers: (1) a general call for manuscripts for potential publication in *TBM* and (2) a call for papers to be published in the March 2011 special section of *TBM* on information technology and evidence implementation. Submissions for the special section are due July 15, 2010. Further information and submission guidelines are available on the SBM Web site at <http://www.sbm.org/tbm/> and the Springer Web site at <http://www.springer.com/medicine/journal/13142>.

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VIReC Data Issues Brief: a monthly newsletter published by 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.

Intended Audience: VA researchers and staff

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Intranet Versions: Call the VIReC Help Desk at (708) 202-2413.

Contact Information: For comments, suggestions, or newsworthy topics that have not been addressed, call (708) 202-2413 or send a message to virec@va.gov.

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