



RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

Data Issues Brief

March 2010

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VA DATA AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

1. Short & Long Diagnostic Related Group Variable Formats: Inpatient Medical SAS Datasets

There are two formats available for the Diagnostic Related Group (DRG) variable in the Inpatient Medical SAS (MedSAS) datasets for fiscal years 2008 to date.

Print Formats	Variable Length (spaces)
Default: DRGSHRTA	32 spaces
Alternate: DRGLONGA	68 spaces

The default format for DRG is DRGSHRTA, with a nominal format length of 32. However, the truncation of the DRG descriptions in this shortened format may leave some terms appearing identical despite different prefixing terms and may leave out information such as presence of comorbidity or complications. An alternate DRGLONGA format, with a length of 68 spaces, addresses the limitations in the DRGSHRTA format. Where practical, VIReC recommends using the DRGLONGA format. Researchers may contact the VIReC Help Desk for more information about these DRG formats at virec@va.gov. DRG abbreviations commonly used by CMS can be found at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/AcuteInpatientPPS/downloads/CMS-1533-FC.pdf>.

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2. Non-veteran Patient Records Captured in VHA ADUSH Monthly Enrollment File Extracts

The Office of the Assistant Undersecretary for Health (ADUSH) has redesigned the ADUSH Monthly Enrollment Files, which now include complete capture of non-veterans. Beginning in March 2009, a patient is identifiable as non-veteran if their record is missing an Enrollment Priority Code value. Although prior to March of 2009, capturing non-veterans was not a part of the ADUSH enrollment extracts design, some non-veterans were included. For these records prior to 2009, a patient is considered non-veteran if both (1) the variable MATCH='COSTONLY' and (2) the Eligibility code variable (ELIG) begins with prefix 'N.' Researchers may access the VIReC Web site for further information on the VHA ADUSH Monthly Enrollment Files at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/Enrollment/EnrollmentDescription.htm>.

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EDUCATION

3. VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminar Series

Outcomes and Lessons from Two Tele-Consultation Applications

Julie Lowery, PhD and John D Whited, MD, MHS

Thursday, March 18, 2010

Julie Lowery, PhD and John D Whited, MD, MHS, presented *Outcomes and Lessons from Two Tele-Consultation Applications* on Thursday, March 18, 2010, at 12 pm ET (*date change for this seminar only*). Dr. Lowery is the Associate Director of the VA Health Services Research & Development Center of Excellence in Ann Arbor MI. John D Whited, MD, MHS, is the Associate Chief of Staff for Research & Development at the Harry S. Truman Memorial Veterans' Hospital in Columbia, MO, as well as Associate Professor of Medicine and Adjunct Associate Professor, Dermatology at the School of Medicine at the University of Missouri.

VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminars take place on the third Tuesday of each month at 12 pm (ET) via LiveMeeting (*date change for this seminar only*). These seminars are also available as on-demand, archived presentations. 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 Cyber Seminar Coordinator, Joanne Stevens at Joanne.Stevens@va.gov.

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4. VIReC Database and Methods Cyber Seminar Series

Improving Mortality Ascertainment Using the VA Vital Status Dataset

Noreen Arnold, MS

Monday, April 5 – 1:00 pm (ET)

Noreen Arnold, MS, Senior Analyst at VIReC, will present *Improving Mortality Ascertainment Using the VA Vital Status Dataset* on Monday, April 5, 2010.

VIReC Database and Methods Cyber Seminars take place on the first Monday of each month at 1:00 pm (ET) via LiveMeeting. VIReC cyber seminars are also available as on-demand, archived presentations. 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 Cyber Seminar Coordinator, Melissa Brown at Melissa.Brown3@va.gov.

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CONFERENCES & CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

5. VHA eHealth University 2010

Registration for the 2010 Veterans Health Administration (VHA), eHealth University (VeHU) is now open. The conference will be held in Las Vegas, NV, August 10-12. VeHU highlights innovations towards patient care through its numerous training sessions and provides education on the VHA Computerized Patient Record System (CPRS), Veterans Health Information Systems and Technology Architecture (VistA), and VHA clinical informatics products. The 2010 training conference offers classes, poster presentations, exhibits, networking opportunities and other events including a VA Health Information Management (VA-HIM) day and a Medical Informatics Workshop.

VeHU is accepting abstracts for potential poster presentations at the 2010 VeHU meeting August 10-12 in Las Vegas, NV. Individuals may submit an unlimited number of entries and an attendance exemption from team guidelines will be granted to one submitter per accepted poster abstract. The deadline for poster abstract submissions is June 4, 2010. The VeHU VA Intranet Web site provides a list of categories for poster submission along with information about funded trip awards. Researchers may access the VHA eHealth University Web site to register for the conference or for further information at <http://www.vehu.va.gov/Default.cfm>.

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6. Building the Evidence Base to Improve Health Care & Outcomes for Women Veterans 2010 National Meeting

The VA's Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) is sponsoring the 2010 National Meeting, Building the Evidence Base to Improve Health Care and Outcomes for Women Veterans in Washington DC, July 15-16, 2010. The meeting will be co-hosted by the VA Greater Los Angeles HSR&D Center of Excellence, the Women Veterans Health Strategic Health Care Group and the RAND Corporation. The meeting will address new knowledge in VA women's health research including interventions and implementation research; increasing collaboration and networking among VA women's health researchers; and understanding the informational and strategic needs of senior VA policy and practice leaders.

Meeting organizers are inviting investigators in health services research who are focusing on Women Veterans' health and health care to submit abstracts for presentation. Abstracts are due by 5:00 pm PT on Monday, April 5, 2010. Travel funds will be provided for one VA presenter per accepted abstract. For questions regarding abstract submissions, researchers may e-mail Ruth.Klap@va.gov or call (818) 895-7711, ext. 5731. Information on the meeting and topics for abstracts are available at http://www.research.va.gov/news/upcoming_events/default.cfm.

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7. The Society for Medical Decision Making 2010 Annual Meeting

The Society for Medical Decision Making (SMDM) is holding its 2010 Annual Meeting, Evidence, Economics, and Ethics: the Future of Health Technology Assessment in Toronto, Canada from October 24-27, 2010. The meeting will address research based on decision and behavior theory and analytical models applied to health related decisions. The agenda includes presentations of original research and short courses on medical decision-making.

The Society is accepting abstracts for both short course proposals and oral/ poster abstracts. All abstracts are due by June 4, 2010. Further information about the meeting and submitting abstracts is available on the Society for Medical Decision Making Web site at <http://www.smdm.org/2010meeting.shtml>.

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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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