



RESEARCHERS' GUIDE TO VA DATA

VA INFORMATION RESOURCE CENTER

Data Issues Brief

January 2011

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VIREC UPDATES

1. VIReC Data Investigation: VETSNET File

VIReC has recently published the *VIReC Data Investigation: VETSNET File* on its Web site. The publication reports on results of VIReC's VETSNET File data investigation (conducted in collaboration with National Data Systems staff) and provides information about the data intended to assist researchers in assessing its utility for their research.

The *VIReC Data Investigation: VETSNET File* can be accessed at

<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/VETSNET/DataInvest-VETSNETer.pdf>. For more

information on the VETSNET file visit VIReC's Web page at

<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/VETSNET/VETSNET.htm>. For detailed information about the VETSNET file, including a data dictionary, visit the National Data Systems Web site. (See the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief* for Web site address.)

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2. HSRData-L Listserv: Recent Topics

The HSRData-L Listserv is a forum for VA researchers and data users to exchange information, ideas, questions, and answers about VA data and informatics. For those who may have missed last month's listserv discussion, some of the topics include:

- 2010 DSS & Fee Basis data
- Medicare ER use
- Identifying patients who've been in ICUs

To view these and other archived discussions, visit the Listserv Web site. VIREC maintains HSRData-L, which is available to researchers and data users with a "va.gov" e-mail address. To subscribe to the listserv, visit the VIREC Intranet Web site. (See the VA Intranet version of this Data Issues Brief for Web site address.)

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DATA & INFORMATION SYSTEMS

3. New Source File for the Vital Status File

The latest version of the VHA Vital Status File (VSF), created on 12/02/10, has a new source file: the VBA Veterans Service Network (VETSNET) Corporate Mini Master File (VETSNET File). The VETSNET File contains information about compensation and pension benefits paid to veterans and their beneficiaries and will eventually encompass all information provided on the VBA Compensation and Pension Mini Master File (C&P Mini File) source. Until then, information from the C&P Mini File and the VETSNET File will be merged into new variables on the VSF. These variables begin with the prefix 'VBA'. Variables beginning with 'CPM' have been removed from the VSF Master.

For more information about these changes see the announcement posted on the HSRData-L Listserv Archive on December 3, 2010. (See the VA Intranet version of this Data Issues Brief for Web site address.)

For more information about the VETSNET File, see

<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/VETSNET/VETSNET.htm>.

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4. Integrated VA & DoD Health Care Data in DSS NDEs

The James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center (FHCC) in North Chicago, Illinois opened on October 1, 2010 as the first fully-integrated federal health care center in the nation. FHCC is a partnership between the VA and the Department of Defense and will serve active duty personnel and their dependents as well as Veterans. FHCC retains the station number of the former North Chicago VAMC (556). VHA DSS serves as FHCC's managerial cost accounting system. As they do for VHA national reporting, DSS NDEs will serve as the basis for reporting to FHCC management about the cost of caring for DoD and VA patients. DSS NDEs now include two new fields that will indicate DoD patient status. The new fields include a DoD flag and a patient category variable, PATCAT, which specifies the DoD patient status upon which eligibility for health care services is based (e.g., active duty, active duty dependent). In addition, the SSN field in DSS NDEs will be changed to a length of 11 to accommodate a two-digit prefix indicating relationship to the active duty DoD patient, known as the "sponsor". The SSN field for family members will contain a unique identifier formed by concatenating the sponsor's SSN and the two-digit prefix.

For more information about workload adaptations for the Lovell facility see the DSS Web site. (See the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief* for Web site address).

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5. New Station #740

With the establishment of the VA Texas Valley Coastal Bend Health Care System, selected Station 671 facilities have been converted to 740 facilities. Patient care encounter data from Station 740 are now being transmitted to the National Patient Care Database (NPCD), affecting the Medical SAS® Outpatient Visit (SF) and Event (SE) Datasets and the Inpatient Encounters (IE) Dataset. Plans are being formulated to retroactively transfer records from the selected 671 facilities to new Station #740. The extent of this transfer is not yet determined.

For more information on these changes, including a facility conversion table, visit the NPCD Audit Trail of Changes. (See the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief* for Web site address).

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EDUCATION

6. VIReC Clinical Informatics Cyberseminar Seminar Series

Title: *Update on Telemedicine Outreach for PTSD - Lessons Learned*

January 18th, 12pm eastern

Zia Agha, MD, MS

Dr. Agha is a clinician researcher within the Section of General Internal Medicine and Health Services Research & Development (HSR&D) at VA San Diego Health Systems (VASDHS) and the University of California, San Diego (UCSD) and Director of Telemedicine Research and Interim Director of HSR&D at VA San Diego.

Title: *Use of Interactive Voice Response Technology in Health Care*

February 15th, 12pm eastern

Margaret Ross Kraft, PhD, RN

Dr. Kraft is an Assistant Professor for the Loyola University Chicago Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing.

Researchers may visit the VIReC Web site to register for a seminar or to access an archived presentation 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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7. VIReC Database and Methods Cyberseminar Seminar Series

Title: *Using Corporate Data Warehouse to Assess Vitals*

March 7th, 1pm eastern

Polly Noel, MA, PhD & Laurel Copeland, MPH, PhD

Dr. Noel is Associate Director of the Veterans Evidence-based Research, Dissemination, & Implementation Center (VERDICT) at South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio, Texas.

Dr. Copeland is a Research Health Scientist for the Veterans Evidence-based Research, Dissemination, & Implementation Center (VERDICT) at South Texas Veterans Health Care System in San Antonio, Texas.

Researchers may visit the VIReC Web site to register for a 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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UPCOMING CONFERENCES & SEMINARS

8. 2011 VA HSR&D Meeting

The 28th National Meeting of the VA Health Services Research and Development Service (HSR&D) will be held February 16-18 at the Gaylord National Convention Center in National Harbor, MD. The theme of the meeting is "Teaming Up for High Value Care." Registration is now open and a tentative agenda has been posted on the HSR&D Web site at <http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/meetings/2011/>.

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CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

9. AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting 2011: Call for Abstracts Nov 2nd - Jan 13th

The 2011 Annual Research Meeting (ARM) will be held June 12-14 at the Washington State Convention Center in Seattle, WA. The call for abstracts will close January 13, 2011. Details regarding themes and submission instructions for the 2011 meeting can be found on the Academy Health Web site at <http://www.academyhealth.org/Events/content.cfm?ItemNumber=842&navItemNumber=1996>.

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VIREC TIP OF THE MONTH

10. What is Health Information Access?

Health Information Access (HIA) is a program within the VHA Privacy Office responsible for:

- Coordinating access to many of the Veterans Health Administrations (VHA) health information resources including the Compensation and Pension Records Interchange (CAPRI) and VistAWeb applications.
- Providing Data Use Agreement (DUA) and Business Associate Agreement (BAA) assistance and consultation.
- Providing research-related privacy reviews for national VHA data custodians.

For more information, including policies and procedures for obtaining access to CAPRI and VistAWeb, visit HIA's Web site or contact the Health Information Access (HIA) program at hia@va.gov. (See the VA Intranet version of this *Data Issues Brief* for the HIA Web site address).

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Intended Audience: VA researchers and staff

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