



# Data Issues Brief

## About the DIB

The *Data Issues Brief (DIB)* is VIReC's monthly publication that informs VA researchers on current news or updates regarding health data, databases, and medical informatics.

## Data and Information Systems

### DSS FY2013 Changes

The *DSS Extracts, FY13 Implementation Guidelines* are now available from the Decision Support Office. The guidelines:

- Include data processing and financial sections
- Provide DSS site teams with instructions for implementing modifications to DSS systems for the coming fiscal year (FY)
- May contain information about upcoming changes to DSS data relevant to researchers

Note: Implementation Guidelines are referred to as "FY Conversion Guidelines" from FY 2007 – 2012.

Available from the DSS Intranet site.

### Outpatient Data Comparisons: MedSAS vs CDW

The Data Quality Program/Data Quality Analysis Team mapped variables in MedSAS Outpatient files to their VistA fields of origin and to comparable fields in the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW).

"SAS\_file\_mapping\_FinalDraft(1)" provides results of the mapping project, including formatting differences and data transformations and calculated variables that exist only in the MedSAS files.

"Mapping\_of\_Outpatient\_Med\_SAS\_Files\_V2[1]" provides additional information about the project, its findings, and recommendations for CDW architects and data users.

Available from CDW's Sharepoint site.

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## FY2012 Q3 DCG Data Available at AITC

Diagnostic Cost Group (DCG) data for FY2012 quarter 3 (Q3) are now available on the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC) mainframe (RMTPRD.MED.DCG.RISK.SMART231.FY12Q3).

VIREC's September 2010 *Data Issue Brief* provides additional information on DCG data:  
[www.virec.research.va.gov/DIB/2010/DIB-Sept-CY10-ER.pdf](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DIB/2010/DIB-Sept-CY10-ER.pdf).

Contact Mei-Ling Shen ([Mei-ling.shen@va.gov](mailto:Mei-ling.shen@va.gov)) at VSSC for more information about these data.

## New CDW Domain: Lab Microbiology

A Lab Microbiology data domain is now available from the CDW. The Micro.AntibioticSensitivity table in the Lab Microbiology domain contains results for antibiotic sensitivity tests. The Bacteriology table contains results of tests for bacteria, parasites, viruses, etc.

A data dictionary in the form of SAS Proc Contents for the Lab Microbiology domain is available from VIREC's website: [www.virec.research.va.gov/CDW/Documentation.htm](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/CDW/Documentation.htm).

Visit CDW's SharePoint site to view metadata reports for Lab Microbiology and other CDW domains.

## Education

### VIREC Cyber Seminars

#### Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminars

<b>Date</b>	September 18, 2012	12pm Eastern
<b>Topic</b>	<i>Mobile display of patient data: The iPhone/iPad iHealth Adaptor</i>	
<b>Presenter</b>	Neil Evans, MD and Deyne Bentt, MD, Washington DC VA Medical Center	

#### Database and Methods Cyber Seminar Series

<b>Date</b>	October 1, 2012	1pm Eastern
<b>Title</b>	<i>Overview of VA Data, Information Systems, National Databases and Research Uses</i>	
<b>Presenter</b>	Denise M. Hynes, MPH, PhD, RN, Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital	

Register for a seminar or access archived presentations on VIREC's website: [www.virec.research.va.gov/CyberSeminars/Overview.htm](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/CyberSeminars/Overview.htm).

E-mail questions to VIREC's Cyber Seminar Coordinator, Margaret Browning, at [Margaret.Browning@va.gov](mailto:Margaret.Browning@va.gov).

## Conferences & Calls for Abstracts

### 2012 Healthcare Data Warehousing Association Annual Conference, Call for Abstracts, July 13

The Healthcare Data Warehousing Association (HDWA) annual conference will be held October 2-4, in Ottawa, Canada. The conference theme is: *Creating an impact on healthcare – Using data to make a difference.*

Visit HDWA's website and register as a member for more information about HDWA and the annual conference, including the call for abstracts: [hdwa.org/hdwa/home/](http://hdwa.org/hdwa/home/).

## 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. Last month's subject lines included:

- CDW Inpatient Schema to SAS Medical Datasets crosswalk
- Stop Codes for Mental Health Visits
- Determining Race/Ethnicity

**Join the Listserv**  
Visit VIREC's Intranet site to  
subscribe to the listserv.

VIREC maintains the HSRData-L Listserv, which is available to researchers and data users with a "va.gov" e-mail address. Archived discussions are available on the HSRData-L Listserv Intranet site.

### Tips for Using the Listserv

The rules for sending and replying to HSRData-L Listserv messages recently changed. When subscribers send a message to the listserv they will receive a request for confirmation e-mail. The message will not post on the listserv until the subscriber acknowledges the confirmation request.

In response to researchers' concerns, it is now possible to attach the following type of documents to listserv posts:

- Word (.doc, .docx)
- Excel (.xls, .xlsx)
- PowerPoint (.ppt, .pptx)
- PDFs
- Notepad (.txt)
- Outlook e-mail message (.msg)

Attachments must be in their final format and intended for all members of the listserv.

## VIREC Tip of the Month



### Where do I find date of death data?

The VHA Vital Status Files (VSF) contain dates of death and demographics for Veterans. National Data Systems updates the VSF quarterly, compiling new data from several sources including:

- VBA Beneficiary Identification Records Locator Subsystem (BIRLS) Death File
- VA's Medicare Vital Status File
- Social Security Administration (SSA) Death Master File.

The VHA Vital Status File section on VIREC's website provides detailed information about the VSF, including research uses for the VSF, file availability and access information: [www.virec.research.va.gov/VSF/Overview.htm](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/VSF/Overview.htm).

VIREC's August 2012 Database and Methods Cyber Seminar, *Improving Mortality Ascertainment Using the VHA Vital Status File*, presents methods for ascertaining mortality using the VHA Vital Status File. Available on VIREC's website: [www.virec.research.va.gov/CyberSeminars/DatabaseArchive/2012.htm](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/CyberSeminars/DatabaseArchive/2012.htm).

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