



# 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.

## VIREC Updates & Announcements

### VIREC Exhibit Booth at 2012 AcademyHealth Annual Meeting

VIREC is pleased to be attending the 2012 AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting in Orlando, FL, June 24–26. VIREC staff will be available at the VIREC exhibit booth throughout the meeting to answer researchers' questions about VA databases and information systems. Stop by the exhibit booth to learn about VIREC and the range of services and products VIREC develops and disseminates for VA researchers.

### Historical Variable Attributes: VHA ADUSH Enrollment Files

VIREC's *Historical Variable Attributes: VHA Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health (ADUSH) Enrollment Files, FY1999-2011* contains current and historical variable attributes for each data field in the VHA ADUSH enrollment files fiscal year-end datasets from FY1999 forward. This resource has been updated to include variable attributes for the FY2011 fiscal year-end dataset.

Available on VIREC's website: [www.virec.research.va.gov](http://www.virec.research.va.gov).

### SAS Proc Contents: DSS Clinical NDEs & VHA ADUSH Enrollment Files

SAS Proc Contents provide descriptions of SAS datasets including variable type, length, format, and labels. New SAS Proc Contents include:

- FY 2011 - VHA ADUSH Enrollment Files: Fiscal Year-End Datasets
- FY2011 and Mid-year FY2012 - Decision Support System (DSS) Laboratory, Laboratory Results, Radiology, and Pharmacy SAS clinical NDE datasets

Note: Mid-year 2012 contents contain descriptions of clinical NDE datasets built in the first half of the FY.

Available on VIREC's website: [www.virec.research.va.gov](http://www.virec.research.va.gov).

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## Data & Information Systems

### CMS Variable in Vital Status Master File

The Vital Status File (VSF) Master file SAS dataset produced on 05/02/12 includes Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) 2010 data. The submission and enrollment status indicator for 2010, CMS\_IND10, has been added to the VSF Master file. This new variable uses the existing NPCD SAS format library definition for CMSDESC.

Visit VIREC's website for more information on the Vital Status Master file: [www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/VitalStatus/VitalStatus.htm](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/VitalStatus/VitalStatus.htm).

The NPCD SAS format library is available on the NPCD Intranet site.

### New HSRData-L Listserv E-mail Address and Password-Protected Archive URL

Effective April 27, 2012, the HSRData-L Listserv e-mail address and archive URL have changed.

When posting a message on HSRData-L, subscribers will receive an automated request to review their message. The Listserv will post the message after this review. Access to the HSRData-L Listserv archive now requires a password.

Please contact the VIREC Help Desk at [virec@va.gov](mailto:virec@va.gov) if you have any questions.

VIREC's Intranet site provides the new HSRData-L Listserv e-mail address and archive URL.

### Probable Test Patients in the Corporate Data Warehouse Flagged

Some probable test patients in the CDW are not labeled with the "TestPatientFlag". These cases, most likely entered during computer systems testing, have unlikely values for identifiers such as patient name and Social Security Number, but their identifier values do not meet VHA guidelines for identifying test patients. Researchers using CDW data will want to consider removing these probable test cases from their analyses.

The Data Quality Analysis (DQA) team within the Office of Informatics and Analytics Data Quality Program developed a CDWPossibleTestPatientFlag to identify both labeled and unlabeled probable test patients. The flag can be found in the Patient domain in both the SPatient.SPatient and Patient.Patient views. DQA's report, *Identifying Probable Unlabeled Test Patients*, contains a description of the business rules used in assigning the new flag.

The report is available on the CDW SharePoint site on the VA Intranet.

## BIRLS Death File Updates Suspended

National Data Systems (NDS) suspended monthly updates to the BIRLS Death File, pending a request for a monthly overlay file. NDS requested a monthly BIRLS overlay file, rather than an update file, to ensure that all changes to VBA data are reflected in the data held by VHA. In the past, NDS received an update file monthly and an overlay file (complete replacement) annually. No updates have been made to the data since a new BIRLS Death File was created on January 24, 2012. Researchers relying on the BIRLS or VHA Vital Status Files for deaths occurring in Calendar Year 2012 are advised to be aware that BIRLS Death File data are current only through 2011.

Visit VIREC's website for additional information regarding the BIRLS Death File: [www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/BIRLS/BIRLS.htm](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/DataSourcesName/BIRLS/BIRLS.htm).

## FY2012 Q2 DCG Data Available at AITC

FY2012 Q2 Diagnostic Code Group (DCG) data are now available on the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC) mainframe (RMTPRD.MED.DCG.RISK.SMART231.FY12Q2).

VIREC's September 2010 *Data Issue Brief* provides additional information on DCG data: [www.virec.research.va.gov/References/DataIssuesBrief/2010/DIB-1009er.pdf](http://www.virec.research.va.gov/References/DataIssuesBrief/2010/DIB-1009er.pdf).

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

## Education

### VIREC Cyber Seminars

#### Clinical Informatics Cyber Seminars

<b>Date</b>	Jun 19, 2012	12pm Eastern
<b>Title</b>	<i>The Prescription Opioid Documentation and Surveillance (PODS) System</i>	
<b>Presenter</b>	Barth Wilsey, MD, VA Northern California Health Care System	
<b>Recently Archived</b>	<i>Wireless Monitoring of Sleep Apnea</i>	

#### Database and Methods Cyber Seminar Series

<b>Date</b>	Jun 4, 2012	1pm Eastern
<b>Title</b>	<i>Using VA Corporate Data Warehouse for Health Services Research</i>	
<b>Presenter</b>	Laurel Copeland, MPH, PhD, Central Texas Veterans Health Care System and Polly Noel, MA, PhD, South Texas Veterans Health Care System	
<b>Recently Archived</b>	<i>Assessing Race and Ethnicity</i>	

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

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 AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting, June 24–26

The 2012 AcademyHealth Annual Research Meeting (ARM) will be held in Orlando, FL, June 24–26. ARM brings together health services researchers, policymakers, and practitioners to address the critical challenges confronting the nation's health care delivery system.

Visit the AcademyHealth website for details regarding this event: [www.academyhealth.org/events/content.cfm?ItemNumber=882&navItemNumber=529](http://www.academyhealth.org/events/content.cfm?ItemNumber=882&navItemNumber=529).

### 2012 HSR&D/QUERI National Conference, July 16-19

The 2012 Health Services Research and Development (HSR&D) Service and the Quality Enhancement Research Initiative (QUERI) will be held at the Gaylord National Hotel in the Washington DC area, July 16-19. The conference theme is "Transforming Veteran Healthcare through Partner-Oriented Research."

Visit HSR&D's website for details regarding this event: [www.hsrd.research.va.gov/meetings/2012/](http://www.hsrd.research.va.gov/meetings/2012/)

## 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 docs
- DSS outpatient FY03 data
- SAS Datasets prior to FY97

**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.



## VIREC Tip of the Month

### Crosswalk between CPT and ICD-9 Procedure Codes

When using procedure data from different data sources, researchers may be faced with the problem of integrating CPT and ICD-9 procedure codes. Crosswalks between these two procedural coding systems are to researchers on the:

- CDW SharePoint site. The crosswalk (CPT-ICD Xwalk) is listed under Reports in the left navigation pane.
- Austin Information Technology Center Mainframe as a SAS dataset: MDPPRD.MDP.SAS.I9PCODE.CPT.CWALK(0).

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**VA Information Resource Center**

Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

Routing mail code: 151V

5000 South 5th Avenue

Hines, IL 60141-5000

[virec@va.gov](mailto:virec@va.gov)

[www.virec.research.va.gov](http://www.virec.research.va.gov)

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