



# VA HEALTH ECONOMICS BULLETIN

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## Health Economics Experts List Updated

**H**ERC has thoroughly updated the list of health economics experts on its web site. The list features more than forty VA staff members who can offer advice on a variety of topics in cost and cost-effectiveness research. Each entry contains the expert's name and contact information, a brief profile, and keywords that represent areas of expertise. Users can search the database by name or keyword.

The experts list is easily reached from the HERC home page by choosing "Resources" and then "Experts." The intranet and internet pages are identical except that email addresses are limited to the intranet site.

Experts in the HERC list cannot guarantee that they will be available to collaborate on new research projects, although VA researchers are welcome to ask. Any such request should be made well in advance of the deadline for funding submission.

## Upcoming HERC Cyber-seminars and Cost-Effectiveness Analysis Courses

### Cyber-seminars

March 17, 2010 – James F. Burgess, Jr., Ph.D.

Benefit-of-the-Doubt Approaches for Calculating a Composite Measure of Quality

April 21, 2010 – Risha Gidwani, Dr.P.H.

The Practice of Cost-Effectiveness Analysis: Designing, Conducting and Interpreting CEA under Non-Ideal Circumstances

### "Conducting Cost-Effectiveness Analysis with VA Data" Course

*This course is primarily designed for VA researchers who wish to learn more about cost-effectiveness analysis.*

March 24, 2010 – Gillian Sanders, Ph.D.

Creating a Decision Model

April 7, 2010 – Patsi, Sinnott, P.T., Ph.D., M.P.H.

Introduction to Effectiveness, Patient Preferences and Utilities

The schedule of upcoming cyber-seminars and courses, and information on the archives, are available on our website: [www.herc.research.va.gov](http://www.herc.research.va.gov).

To register for these seminars and courses, visit

[http://www.hsrcd.research.va.gov/for\\_researchers/cyber\\_seminars/catalog.cfm](http://www.hsrcd.research.va.gov/for_researchers/cyber_seminars/catalog.cfm)

## HERC Launches Online Discussion Board

with participants during each session. VA staff can now continue the discussion by visiting the new HERC SharePoint discussion board on the VA intranet. The board features questions and answers from previous course sessions. Recent questions include, “Are the Austin data available only in SAS format?” and “Why do patients get 2 separate prescriptions for the same drug (same NDC) on the same day?”

to health economics. Visit the board by clicking on the link above. Select “CyberCourse Discussion” in the left-hand menu column, and click each link to review questions and answers, or click “New” to ask a question. The “Actions” button features an RSS feed and an alert function which notifies users of new replies to a given question. Users can also search the board by using the search box in the top right-hand portion of the webpage.

Speakers in the HERC cyber-course and cyber-seminars engage in lively discussions

HERC welcomes all course attendees with VHA computer accounts to view, reply to, or ask questions related

VA staff may request the URL of the HERC discussion board by writing to [herc@va.gov](mailto:herc@va.gov).

**Dina Roumiantseva** joins HERC as a Research Assistant in March, 2010. She earned a BA in psychology and biology from Harvard University, winning the Jerome Kagan Undergraduate Research Award from the Harvard Children’s Initiative. Subsequently, she worked as a Research Assistant in a visual neuroscience lab at the Smith-Kettlewell Eye Research Institute in San Francisco and studied economics at the University of California, Berkeley. In her spare time, Dina enjoys staying active by practicing yoga, cycling, and participating in outdoor activities.

## HERC Updates Microcost and Fee Basis Guidebooks

HERC announces the release of two updated guidebooks. The first is “Microcost Methods for Determining VA Healthcare Costs.” Its purpose is to introduce researchers to microcosting, a set of methods for determining the cost of healthcare. Microcosting is often applied when cost figures are not readily available, such as for new health care interventions, or when a high level of precision is needed. The guidebook explains microcosting methods and provides guidance on using them with data produced by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). The principles described apply to other healthcare systems as well.

The second guidebook is entitled “Fee Basis Data: A Guide for Researchers.” It represents an update and expansion of material in HERC Technical Report #18. The Fee Basis program enables VA to purchase inpatient and outpatient services from non-VA providers when VA cannot provide timely care itself. The guidebook describes the organization and content of the Fee Basis datasets, provides information on program rules, and makes recommendations about use of Fee Basis data for research.

The guidebooks are posted on the HERC intranet web site. From the home page choose “Publications” and then “Guidebooks.”