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VA HEALTH ECONOMICS BULLETIN

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DSS Cost Data Move to New Data Center

Beginning October 1st, 2012 the Decision Support System (DSS) National Data Extracts (NDEs) will be stored exclusively in the Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW) and will no longer be available on the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC) mainframe. Data for FY2012 and earlier will be available in the CDW in SQL and SAS formats. Beginning in FY2013, DSS data on the CDW will only be available in SQL format. Access to data stored in the CDW is granted by the National Data Systems (NDS) and future data requests will go through NDS.

For researchers who currently have access to DSS NDEs on the AITC mainframe there is an expedited process to request access to DSS NDEs on the CDW. On July 23, 2012 detailed instructions regarding transferring DSS NDE access to CDW were emailed to all DSS NDE users with approved functional task codes on the AITC mainframe. Users were provided a link to a SharePoint form which must be completed by the user and approved by the user's supervisor before September 3, 2012. Users who do not complete this process by the September 3rd deadline will need to request access using the standard NDS request process. For more information see the VIREC website at <http://www.virec.research.va.gov/Data-Transition/NDE-Process.htm>.

FY2011 HERC DSS Discharge Cost Dataset and Updated Guidebook Now Available

HERC has released its FY2011 DSS Hospital Discharge Cost dataset. The HERC Discharge Cost dataset (HDISCH) provides information on the cost of an entire inpatient hospitalization. HERC's Discharge Cost dataset is identical to the DSS Discharge dataset, providing information on the entire inpatient stay, but includes cost and length of stay by inpatient categories of care. This discharge view includes information on the type of inpatient care, such as acute medical, psychiatric, or long-term care, obtained from the DSS Treating Specialty file. The HERC Discharge Cost dataset can be found at the Austin Information Technology Center at RMTPRD.HERC.DSS.SAS.HDISCHyy, where yy represents the last two digits of the fiscal year of the dataset. The companion guide has been updated for FY2011 and describes the methods used in creating the dataset, methods for reconciling differences between the Discharge and Treating Specialty NDEs, and notes for using the HERC Discharge database. The guide is available on the HERC Intranet under Publications—Guidebooks <http://vawww.herc.research.va.gov/publications/guidebooks.asp>.

FY2011 HERC Average Cost Data Available

HERC has released its average cost data for FY2011. HERC estimates an average cost for every inpatient stay and every outpatient encounter during the fiscal year appearing the in FY2011 Medical SAS Inpatient and Outpatient databases, respectively known as the Patient Treatment File (PTF) and the Outpatient Care File (OPC). The HERC average cost method assumes that every health encounter, inpatient or outpatient, has the average cost of all encounters that share its same characteristics. HERC has created average cost estimates for FY1998 to FY2011 with the goal of developing a set of nationally representative cost estimates that could be used in cost-effectiveness analyses. HERC average cost data is available from the HERC data repository located at the Austin Information Technology Center (AITC) in the RMPTPRD.HERC.SAS directory. The contents for each HERC average cost dataset have been updated through FY2011 and are available on the HERC Intranet. For more information on HERC average costs see the HERC average cost Internet page at <http://www.herc.research.va.gov/data/ac.asp>.

FY11 HERC Inpatient Average Cost Dataset and Guidebook

HERC inpatient average cost data contain estimates of the cost of each inpatient stay reported in VA databases. There are three HERC inpatient average cost files: discharge, medical-surgical, and non medical-surgical. The discharge file includes costs for all persons discharged in a given fiscal year. The medical-surgical file includes all persons discharged from only an acute medical-surgical bedsection and the non medical-surgical file includes all persons discharged from non-acute medical-surgical bedsections—that is rehabilitation, mental health, or long-term bedsections. The updated companion guide describes the methods in building the dataset, assumptions underlying the dataset, and how to use the dataset, including limitations. This guide is available on the HERC Intranet under Publications—Guidebooks at <http://vaww.herc.research.va.gov/publications/guidebooks.asp>.

FY11 HERC Outpatient Average Cost Dataset

HERC outpatient average cost data contain cost estimates for each outpatient encounter reported in the VA databases, based on the given Current Procedural Terminology (CPT) code and clinic type. The HERC outpatient average cost files can be merged with the Outpatient Events (SE) file using the ENCOUNTER_ID variable, from FY2003 to present. A companion guidebook details the methods used to calculate the VA cost of care, how care is assigned to categories of ambulatory care, and a description of the variables in the dataset. This guide is available on the HERC Intranet under Publications—Guidebooks at <http://vaww.herc.research.va.gov/publications/guidebooks.asp>.

FY11 HERC Person-level Cost Datasets

HERC person-level cost data contain total annual costs for VA care received by each person who used the VA health care system during the fiscal year. These data allow researchers to determine the annual costs of individual patients without needing to extract and summarize stay- and visit-level information from numerous VA databases. The person-level datasets include HERC average costs at the local and national levels, detailed to five categories of inpatient care and four categories of outpatient care, including pharmacy costs and total Fee Basis costs. The guide is available on the HERC Intranet under Publications—Guidebooks at <http://vaww.herc.research.va.gov/publications/guidebooks.asp>.

Featured Health Economics Expert: Clara “Libby” Dismuke



Libby Dismuke, PhD
Research Health Scientist

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and Health Interventions for
Diverse Populations,
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Clara E. “Libby” Dismuke is a Research Health Scientist in the Center for Disease Prevention and Health Interventions for Diverse Populations at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center and a Research Assistant Professor at the Center for Health Disparities Research in the Department of Medicine at the Medical University of South Carolina. Libby received her Ph.D. in economics from the University of South Carolina. She has published in the clinical areas of traumatic brain injury, diabetes, depression, post traumatic stress disorder, spinal cord injury, and substance abuse and stroke. Libby has also published in the methodological areas of racial/ethnic disparities in clinical outcomes and health services utilization, cost-effectiveness of interventions, and patient and provider financial incentives. With prior work experience in Portugal, Libby also has an interest in international comparative health services utilization and clinical outcomes.

Libby has participated in the design and implementation of federally funded grants through VA Health Services Research and Development, Department of Defense, National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, National Institute of Drug Abuse, and the National Institute of Mental Health.

She has been the Principal Investigator on grants funded by the Agency for Healthcare Quality and Research and the South Carolina Spinal Cord Injury Fund. Currently her main VA focus is on longitudinal disparities in clinical outcomes and health services utilization in Veterans clinically diagnosed with TBI. In her spare time, Libby enjoys martial arts and dancing.

Health Economics Experts List

To help build a community of health economists, HERC maintains a list of health economics experts by geographic locations and areas of expertise. The list features more than forty VA staff who can offer advice on a variety of topics in cost and cost-effectiveness research. Researchers who are planning a study can use this list to find a health economist to include in their funding proposal.

The current list of HERC experts is available on the HERC Experts web page at:
<http://www.herc.research.va.gov/resources/experts.asp?search=%25>

Interested in being added to the list? Write to us at herc@va.gov

HERC Cyberseminars and Course

HERC's "Conducting Cost-Effectiveness Analyses with VA Data" Course

On September 5, 2012, HERC will begin its course series on cost-effectiveness analyses with VA data. This course is primarily designed for VA researchers who wish to learn more about cost-effectiveness analyses. The lectures are held on Wednesdays, with each hourly session beginning at 11:00am Pacific or 2:00pm Eastern time.

September 5, 2012

Elements of a Complete Cost-Effectiveness Analysis (CEA)
Ciaran Phibbs, Ph.D.

September 26, 2012

Estimating the Cost of an Intervention
Todd Wagner, Ph.D.

October 3, 2012

Inpatient and Outpatient Costs from DSS
Jean Yoon, Ph.D.

October 10, 2012

Sources of VA Care Costs and Providers
Paul Barnett, Ph.D., Todd Wagner, Ph.D.,
Ciaran Phibbs, Ph.D., and Jean Yoon, Ph.D.

October 24, 2012

TBA
TBA

October 31, 2012

Introduction to Effectiveness, Patient Preference,
and Utilities
Patsi Sinnott, P.T., Ph.D., M.P.H.

November 14, 2012

Modeling Health-Related Quality of Life over Time
Vilija Joyce, M.S.

November 28, 2012

Budget Impact Analysis
Patsi Sinnott, P.T., Ph.D., M.P.H.

December 5, 2012

How can Cost-Effectiveness Analysis be Made More
Relevant to US Health Care?
Paul Barnett, Ph.D.

Cyberseminars

The Health Economics Cyberseminars feature presentations on a variety of health economics and health services topics.

Each hourly session begins at 11:00am Pacific or 2:00pm Eastern time, unless otherwise noted.

August 15, 2012

Cost-Effectiveness Using Decision-Analytic Modeling
Kee Chan, Ph.D.
Investigator, Center for Health Quality Outcomes and
Economic Research (CHQOER), Bedford VAMC

September 19, 2012

TBA
Stephan D. Fihn, M.D., M.P.H.
Research Health Scientist, Northwest Center for Outcomes
Research in Older Adults, VA Puget Sound HCS

October 17, 2012

TBA
Denise Hynes, M.P.H., Ph.D, B.S.N.
Director, VA Information Resource Center (VIREC),
Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital

The schedule of upcoming cyber seminars and
courses, and information on the
archives are available on the HERC website:
<http://www.herc.research.va.gov>.

To register for these seminars and courses, visit the
HSR&D Cyberseminars webpage:
[http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/cyberseminars/
catalog-upcoming.cfm](http://www.hsr.d.research.va.gov/cyberseminars/catalog-upcoming.cfm)