

VA HEALTH ECONOMICS BULLETIN

A VA Health Services Research & Development Resource Center

Volume 14, Issue 4
November, 2014



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The VA Health Economics Bulletin is a quarterly publication of the Health Economics Resource Center (HERC) to bring VA researchers updates on datasets and data sources.

For more information on VA datasets, visit the HERC web page for Guidebooks and Technical Reports at <http://www.herc.research.va.gov/publications>.

For economics-related questions, please view our *Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)* web page at <http://www.herc.research.va.gov/resources/faq.asp>.

For economics advice, please call the HERC consulting service at (650) 617-2630 or email us at herc@va.gov.

New Research Finds Link between PTSD and Spontaneous Preterm Delivery

Pregnant women with active posttraumatic stress disorder are at an increased risk of spontaneous preterm delivery, according to a new study from HERC Economist Ciaran Phibbs and other researchers at the Department of Veterans Affairs and Stanford University School of Medicine. Researchers found that having PTSD within 1 year of giving birth increased a woman's chances of spontaneous preterm delivery by 35 percent, translating into two excess preterm births for every 100 deliveries.

This study, published online November 6th in *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, looked at data for 16,334 births covered by the Veterans Health Administration from 2000-2012. Data showed that spontaneous preterm delivery was significantly higher for women with active PTSD compared to women with a history of PTSD

(defined as PTSD cases with no diagnosis documented within a year of giving birth) or no PTSD, even when controlling for confounding factors. Study findings are based on the largest cohort of pregnant women with PTSD yet assembled. It supports a causal relationship between PTSD and spontaneous preterm delivery.

While the consequences of spontaneous preterm delivery can be serious, the causes remain poorly understood. Efforts to reduce the preterm birth rate have made little progress over the past two decades. This new research highlights the importance of identifying PTSD-affected pregnancies as high-risk and connecting pregnant women with PTSD to the appropriate mental health care in order to improve infant outcomes.

Read the official Stanford University press release at <https://med.stanford.edu/news/all-news/2014/11/pregnant-women-with-ptsd-more-likely-to-give-birth-prematurely.html>



Dedicated to improving the quality of health economics research

Note for Researchers: FY14 Managerial Cost Accounting (MCA) National Data Extracts (NDEs) are now available at the VA Corporate Data Warehouse (CDW). Visit the VHA Data Portal for more information: <http://vaww.vhadataportal.med.va.gov/>.

HERC Average Cost Data on VHA Data Portal

HERC average cost data are now described on the VHA Data Portal. The HERC Average Cost Data page describes the three types of average cost data HERC creates (inpatient, outpatient, and person-level) and the process for requesting access. The HERC data are available at the Austin Information Technology Center and at the VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure

(VINCI). Researchers can access this information on the VHA Data Portal by navigating to *Data Sources > HERC Average Cost data* or <http://vaww.vhadataportal.med.va.gov/DataSources/HERCAverageCostData.aspx>.

Note: This link directs you to an internal VA website that is not available to the public.

The VHA Data Portal(<http://vaww.vhadataportal.med.va.gov>) provides VA data users that with information about many VA data sources and how to access them. It is a collaborative effort among the National Data Systems (NDS), VA Information Resource Center (VIREC), VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI), and the VHA Data Quality program.

HERC Average Cost Guidebooks Updated

HERC has updated its guidebooks on the annual average cost data for outpatient care, inpatient stays, and person-level costs. The guidebooks are available on the HERC website under *Publications > Guidebooks*, or at <http://www.herc.research.va.gov/publications/guidebooks.asp>.

HERC's Outpatient Average Cost Dataset for VA Care guidebook has been updated for fiscal years 2011 to 2013, including updates on the request process for the data now stored on the VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI). The outpatient data report estimates of each outpatient encounter reported in the VA Outpatient Care Events file (SE), including three cost

estimates: HERC value, national cost estimate, and local cost estimate. The guidebook describes the methods of dataset creation including cost and utilization data, provider and facility payments and how to use the files.

The HERC Average Cost Datasets for VA Inpatient Care guidebook has been updated for fiscal year 2013, including the new access request process for the data at VINCI. The inpatient average cost files report estimates of each inpatient stay found in the VA Patient Treatment File (PTF), based on costs reported in the DSS treating specialty file. Costs are split into three separate files: medical-surgical, non-medical-surgical and discharge. The guide

includes information about the methods used to build the files, underlying assumptions and how to use the data.

The fiscal year 2013 update to the Guidebook to the HERC Person-Level Cost Datasets includes the new process for requesting access to the HERC data at VINCI. The person-level cost files include cost sub-totals for eleven categories: five categories of inpatient care, four categories of outpatient care, outpatient pharmacy and non-VA purchased care (Fee Basis). The person-level cost data provide researchers with information on the cost incurred by the individual patient without needing to extract and summarize information from several VA databases.

HERC Website Updated

HERC has updated content on several of its web pages, including the HERC average cost methods, access to HERC cost data at VINCI, tabulations of person-level costs, and frequently asked question about average annual outpatient costs.

The HERC average cost methods webpage briefly describes the methods used to create the average cost data, and includes a table on the national cost-to-charge ratios for each category of outpatient care. HERC has updated several online-only outpatient average cost tables for fiscal years 2011-2013, including the table of clinic stops mapped to HERC category of care assignments, national cost-to-charge ratios, Medicare conversion factors to Relative Value Units, and VA Utilization by Source. For details on the HERC average cost methods and to find the outpatient average cost tables, see

the HERC website under *Methods > Methods for Cost Determination > Average Cost Method* or at http://www.herc.research.va.gov/methods/methods_cost_ac.asp.

The HERC webpage on access to HERC cost data was updated to reflect the new procedures to request access to the HERC cost data now located on the VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure (VINCI). Researchers who wish to use the HERC data at VINCI can now request access using the Data Access Request Tracker (DART). For details on the new request process see http://www.herc.research.va.gov/resources/register_data.asp.

The person-level cost table describes the annual costs of care each VHA user receives. This table summarizes the 11 care categories into four cost categories: inpatient, out-

patient, pharmacy, and non-VA purchased care. Non-VA purchased care claims take considerable time to finalize so data are added to this table only after 2 fiscal years have elapsed. The data are available on the HERC Intranet website under *Data > Tabulations* or at <http://www.herc.research.va.gov/data/tabulations.asp>.

HERC also updated frequently asked question (FAQ) regarding the average cost of VA outpatient visits. The FAQ includes a table of the last 6 fiscal years for the national average cost per visit for outpatient care. To view the FAQ navigate to *Resources > FAQ > F4* or at http://www.herc.research.va.gov/resources/faq_f04.asp.

Staff Update

Samantha Murrell joined HERC as a Research Associate in October 2014. She earned an MPH from Boston University and previously worked at the BU School of Medicine, where she conducted research in community-based approaches to reducing health care disparities. Samantha recently moved to the Bay Area and enjoys running, cycling, and yoga in her spare time.

Angel Park joined HERC as a programmer in November 2014. She completed her MS in nutrition and MPH at Tufts University. After spending a few years in Boston working on dental public health projects, she is excited to be back in her native California and especially to have this opportunity to work at HERC. Outside of the office, she enjoys riding her bikes, climbing, and cooking for loved ones.

Winifred Scott joined HERC as a Research Associate in November 2014. She earned a MPH in Infectious Diseases and Vaccinology from UC Berkeley and has since worked on research projects at Stanford University and UCSF. Outside of work, she enjoys hiking and drawing.

HERC

The Health Economics Resource Center produces pioneering, rigorous health economics and related research that improves health care within and beyond VA.

Our research activities include innovation and excellence in:

- Performing cost and cost-effectiveness analyses
- Studying the efficiency of health care
- Evaluating health programs and interventions
- Planning, managing, and analyzing randomized clinical trials
- Health care decision modeling
- Assessing health-related quality of life
- Health economics and health services research

We are committed to:

- Integrity
- High quality of work
- Productivity
- Transparency
- Mutual trust and respect
- Teamwork
- Investment in people through learning and mentoring
- A flexible, supportive, and enjoyable work environment



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HERC Cyber Seminars

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

Register: <http://www.hsrc.research.va.gov/Cyberseminars>
Schedule & archives: <http://www.herc.research.va.gov/training/>

Cyber Seminars

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

Thursday

January 22, 2015
12:00pm PT

Budget Impact Analysis

Neil Jordan, Ph.D., M.S.

Core Investigator

Center for Innovation for Complex Chronic Healthcare (CINCCCH)

Hines VA Medical Center

February 18, 2015
11:00am PT

Risk Adjustment

Todd Wagner, Ph.D.

Associate Director

Health Economics Resource Center (HERC)/

Center for Innovation to Implementation (Ci2i)

VA Palo Alto Health Care System

Interested in presenting in the HERC Health Economics Cyber Seminar Series? Contact HERC Economist Jean Yoon (Jean.Yoon@va.gov) for more information.

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