



***VA Information Resource Center
Data Issues Brief
January, 2001***

1. New AAC User Documentation

The new user documentation that VIREC requested from, and collaborated with, the Austin Automation Center (AAC) regarding “working with large datasets” is now posted at the AAC Intranet Web site: http://vaww.aac.va.gov/operations/austin_info.asp under the new menu: “**MedNotes**” -- **SAS info for medical customers**. VIREC wishes to extend its gratitude to the AAC and Kirk Poschman for implementing this new service to researchers.

2. VHA Enterprise Architecture (EA)

The 2001 edition of the VHA Enterprise Architecture (EA) (formerly called Information Technology Architecture) also known as the “EA 2001,” is now available at <http://vaww.va.gov/vha-ita/ita.html>. Three stand-alone volumes comprise the “EA 2001:” (1) Business Vision; (2) Foundations, Statement of Direction and Transition Plan; and (3) Framework. For each volume, there is a Reader’s Guide, Acronyms and Glossary, Index, and focused subject matter. “EA 2001” introduces a new set of Architecture Models, an enhanced Security Architecture Framework and increased content/improved organization of the entire document. Hard copies can be obtained by sending an e-mail request to: jim.demetriades@med.va.gov.

3. VA InfoSec 2001

The VA Annual InfoSec Conference will be held the week of June 25 in Orlando, Florida. Conference planners are calling for presentations. Proposed sessions may address any aspect of information security practice or theory, including both technical and administrative topics. For more information, contact Sue Hotzler, EES, Program Manager EES Minneapolis (612) 725-2000, X4549.

4. CHIP Produces HIPAA Summary

The Coalition for Health Information Policy (CHIP) has produced a concise summary of the final rule establishing "Standards for Privacy of Individually Identifiable Health Information" (45 CFR Parts 160-164) pursuant to the requirements of Section 264 of the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). The summary highlights the changes from the November 1999 proposed rule, uses and disclosures of protected health information, obligations of covered entities, patient rights, relation to state law, penalties and enforcement, transition provisions and compliance dates. Two specific items that should be of particular interest to researchers are quoted below:

- “The final rule eliminates the special provisions relating to ‘research unrelated to treatment.’ It requires a covered entity to obtain an authorization from the patient for the use/disclosure of Personal Health Information (PHI) that is created as part of any research that includes treatment of the individual, and requires a similar authorization or a waiver of authorization from an IRB or privacy board for the use of PHI for research that does not include treatment or other direct intervention with the patient. IRBs and privacy board review criteria for the use of PHI must include assessment of the degree of risk (i.e., determination of "minimal risk") to the individual's privacy rights.”
- “De-identification - As covered entities, health plans and providers may use protected health information without consent or authorization to create de-identified health information. Health plans and providers may disclose PHI to a business associate for the purpose of de-identification; however, business associates - including health care clearinghouses, in almost all instances - can only use PHI for this purpose if permitted to under its business associate contract. The final rule permits covered entities to attach codes to de-identified information that will allow re-identification of the individual at a later date, provided that such codes do not include variants of information that identifies the individual and are not used or disclosed by the covered entity for any other purpose.”

To view the summary document provided by CHIP, visit the American Medical Informatics Association’s Web site at: <http://www.amia.org/resource/news/f5.html> and select CHIP Summary.

Data Issues Briefs are developed by the VA Information Resource Center (VIREC) for the purpose of informing and updating VA researchers on current and pending happenings and changes regarding health data, databases, and medical informatics. *Data Issues Briefs* are produced on a monthly basis and are distributed through e-mail subscriptions. Earlier issues are posted and available on the VIREC Web site at <http://www.virec.research.med.va.gov>. If you wish to receive future issues direct, please send an e-mail message to the VIREC at virec@research.hines.med.va.gov or call 708-202-2413.