

HEALTH AND RETIREMENT STUDY

**VA-HRS Data Record Matching Project
Restricted Data**

Data Description and Usage

Version 1.0, November 2016

To the Restricted Data Investigator: This restricted data set is intended for exclusive use by you and the persons (if any) specified in your HRS-MiCDA Enclave application.

If there are any questions about this data set and its use, refer to the HRS Restricted Data Web Site (<http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu/rda>) or contact HRS Restricted Data Applications Processing (hrsdaapplication@umich.edu).

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1. Overview

The Health and Retirement Study (HRS) is a national longitudinal study of the economic, health, marital, and family status, as well as public and private support systems, of older Americans. The HRS is a rich source of longitudinal, cross-sectional data for researchers and policymakers who study aging. Funding for the Health and Retirement Study is provided by the National Institute on Aging at NIH (U01 AG009740), with supplemental support from the Social Security Administration. The study is conducted by the Institute for Social Research (ISR) at the University of Michigan.

2. Obtaining the Data

2a. VA-HRS Data Record Matching Project Access

Although most HRS data sets are available to the public without restriction, certain HRS data sets contain sensitive respondent information and are only available under terms of a formal agreement negotiated between the researcher and HRS. Prospective users of the *VA-HRS Data Record Matching Project* will need apply for access to the [MiCDA Enclave](#) in order to access the data set.

For instructions on how to proceed, follow the [HRS-MiCDA Enclave Application Information](#) link on the [HRS Restricted Data](#) page. You may also contact the HRS Restricted Data Applications Processing Team (hrrsdaapplication@umich.edu) by email.

2b. Restricted Data Agreement

This restricted data set is intended for exclusive use by you and the persons (if any) specified in your HRS-MiCDA Enclave application.

2c. Publications Based on Restricted Data

Your restricted data agreement specifies that you will inform HRS of any papers, publications, or presentations based on this restricted data set. Please send a copy of such publications in PDF format via e-mail to hrrsquestions@umich.edu with "Attn: Papers and Publications" in the subject line. If you wish, you may include a bibliographical reference.

As an alternative, you may transmit publications in paper format by postal mail:

Health and Retirement Study
Attn: Papers and Publications
The Institute for Social Research, Room 3410
P.O. Box 1248
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106-1248

3. Data File Contents

3a. Description

The *VA-HRS Data Record Matching Project* data set contains health care records for HRS respondents who utilized services in the Veterans Affairs (VA) healthcare system between the years of 1999 and 2013. For this data linkage project, the HRS identified veterans (both living and deceased) based on their self-report of military service in a prior wave of the HRS. A finder file that included HRS participants who were deceased veterans, and living veterans who gave informed consent, was sent to the VA Information Resource Center (VIREC), where a probabilistic match of VA and HRS identifiers was performed. The file matches 2,360 respondents in the current version of the tracker file (Tracker 2014)¹. This data set includes:

- 1) VA enrollment and eligibility information;
- 2) Utilization of hospital, outpatient, and long-term care services;
- 3) Costs;
- 4) Pharmacy (prescription and non-prescription medications);
- 5) Laboratory and radiology services.

For additional information on file contents, see Appendix A.

3b. Sample Information

The HRS finder file included a total of 4,055 deceased self-reported veterans. Of those, 1,445 subjects (36%) were matched to the VA master file (indicating that the subject had either health care or other benefit records within the VA). 950 subjects (23%) had records indicating utilization of VA health care services between 1999 and 2013. The HRS mailed VA-HRS data linkage data release authorizations (i.e., consent forms) to a total of 3,811 living self-reported Veterans in July of 2013. A total of 1,875 subjects (49%) consented to the linkage. Of those, 915 subjects (49%) were matched to the VA master file, and 718 (38%) utilized VA health care between 1999 and 2013. The final total sample of self-reported Veterans in the HRS who were linked to the VA master file was 2,360 and the total sample who had health care utilization between 1999 and 2013 data was 1,669.

¹ The HRS tracker file is created to facilitate the use of HRS data within and across waves. It contains one record for every person who was ever eligible to be interviewed in any wave. The tracker file version used in preparation of this dataset (Tracker 2014, Early v1) covers all types of interviews (core, exit, and post-exit) for 1992 through the 2014 interviewing year.

3c. Data Inputs/Outputs²

HRS File	Section	Level	Record Count	Content	Description	VA File Name
VAHRSA_R	A	R	2360	Respondent	VA-HRS Demographics	vahrs_demographics_v2
VAHRSE_E	B	E	6268	Enrollment History	VA-HRS Access to Care	Vahrs_va_access_to_care_v2
VAHRSC1_C	C1	C	1829	Average Cost Data	Discharge	vahrs_acd_dischg9913
VAHRSC2_C	C2	C	1503	Average Cost Data	Medical Surgical Care	vahrs_acd_mdsrc9913
VAHRSC3_C	C3	C	138	Average Cost Data	Rehab, Mental Health, and Long Term Care	vahrs_acd_nmdsrc9913
VAHRSC4_C	C4	C	183133	Average Cost Data	Outpatient Care	vahrs_acd_opcse9913
VAHRSD1_A	D1	A	358116	Admissions	Decision Support System (DSS) Laboratory	vahrs_dss_lab
VAHRSD2_A	D2	A	13733	Admissions	Decision Support System (DSS) Radiology	vahrs_dss_rad
VAHRSE1_F	E1	F	1705	Fee	FEE Basis Inpatient Ancillary	vahrs_fee_ancil9913
VAHRSE2_F	E2	F	386	Fee	FEE Basis Inpatient	vahrs_fee_inpt9913
VAHRSE3_F	E3	F	37979	Fee	FEE Basis Outpatient	vahrs_fee_med9913
VAHRSE4_F	E4	F	17	Fee	FEE Basis Payments to pharmacies	vahrs_fee_pha9913
VAHRSE5_F	E5	F	230	Fee	FEE Basis ID Cards for selected Veterans	vahrs_fee_vet9913
VAHRSF1_X	F1	X	12065	RX	Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM)	vahrs_ivrx0313
VAHRSF2_X	F2	X	305665	RX	Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM)	vahrs_oprx9913
VAHRSF3_X	F3	X	18838	RX	Pharmacy Benefits Management (PBM)	vahrs_udrx0513
VAHRSG1_A	G01	A	108	Non-VA Care	Non-VA Care Bed Section	vahrs_nb9913
VAHRSG2_A	G02	A	108	Non-VA Care	Non-VA Care Main	vahrs_nm9913
VAHRSG3_A	G03	A	63	Non-VA Care	Non-VA Care Procedure	vahrs_np9913
VAHRSG4_A	G04	A	29	Non-VA Care	Non-VA Care Surgery	vahrs_ns9913
VAHRSG5_A	G05	A	2033	Inpatient	Inpatient Acute Care Bed Section	vahrs_pb9913
VAHRSG6_A	G06	A	133	Observations	Observation Care Bed Section	vahrs_pbo9913
VAHRSG7_A	G07	A	1487	Inpatient	Inpatient Acute Care Main	vahrs_pm9913
VAHRSG8_A	G08	A	133	Observations	Observation Care Main	vahrs_pmo9913
VAHRSG9_A	G09	A	2425	Inpatient	Inpatient Acute Care Procedure	vahrs_pp9913
VAHRSG10_A	G10	A	55	Observations	Observation Care Procedure	vahrs_ppo9913
VAHRSG11_A	G11	A	336	Inpatient	Inpatient Acute Care Surgery	vahrs_ps9913
VAHRSH1_A	H1	A	254	Inpatient Extended	Inpatient Extended Care Bed Section	vahrs_xb9913
VAHRSH2_A	H2	A	231	Inpatient Extended	Inpatient Extended Care Main	vahrs_xm9913
VAHRSH3_A	H3	A	345	Inpatient Extended	Inpatient Extended Care Procedure	vahrs_xp9913
VAHRSH4_A	H4	A	5	Inpatient Extended	Inpatient Extended Care Surgery	vahrs_xs9913
VAHRSJ1_V	J1	V	187247	Outpatient	Outpatient Events	vahrs_se9913
VAHRSJ2_V	J2	V	122216	Outpatient	Outpatient Visit	vahrs_sf9913

² See Appendix B: Utilization Data Sources and VA-HRS SAS File Names for additional information on VA-HRS files.

4. If You Need to Know More

This document is intended to serve as a brief overview to provide guidelines for using the *VA-HRS Data Record Matching Project* data set. If you have questions or concerns that are not adequately covered here or on our Web site, or if you have any comments, please contact us. We will do our best to provide answers.

4a. HRS Internet Site

Health and Retirement Study public release data and additional information about the study are available on the Internet. To access public data or to find out more about restricted data products and procedures, visit the [HRS Web site](#).

4b. Contact Information

If you need to contact us, you may do so by one of the methods listed below.

Internet: Help Desk at the HRS Web site (<http://hrsonline.isr.umich.edu>)

E-mail: hrsquestions@umich.edu

Postal Service:

Health and Retirement Study
The Institute for Social Research
426 Thompson Street, 3050 ISR
Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104

Appendix A: Reference Document Bibliography

This section lists supporting documents received from the VA that provide guidance for researchers. Unless otherwise indicated, these documents are included in the distribution package.³

All Sections

Roumiantseva, Dina, Patricia L. Sinnott and Paul G. Barnett. *Guide to VA Data on Health Care Providers*. Health Economics Resource Center, Department of Veterans Affairs, Menlo Park, California (2011).

[.\All\BOOK_673.pdf]

Tarlov, Elizabeth. *VA-HRS Data Linkage Project: Record Matching Report*. Hines, IL: U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Health Services Research and Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (2016).

[.\All\VA-HRS Data Record Matching Report.pdf]

Tarlov, Elizabeth. *VA-HRS Data Linkage Project: Removal of Title 38 Section 7332 Protected Conditions Data from Veterans' Records*. Hines, IL: U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Health Services Research and Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (2016).

[.\All\VA-HRS Protected Conditions Report_FINAL_rev02-20-2016.pdf]

Sections A and B: Demographics and Access to Care

HRS. *VA-HRS Demographics and Access to Care Overview*. Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan, Health and Retirement Study (2016). This document is a compendium of files containing supporting information about access to VA care. The file titles are:

- Guide to VA Access-to-Care File
- Appendix 1-VA_ACCESS_STATUS Derivation
- Appendix 2-Historical Guide to VA Priority Groups
- Appendix 3-Historical Guide to VA Copayment Requirements

[.\SectionsAB\VAHRSDemographics_ATC.pdf]

Sections C1-C4: Cost

HERC. *Health Economics Resource Center Average Cost Data*. Menlo Park, CA. VA Palo Alto, Health Economics Resource Center (2013).

[.\SectionsC1C4\HERC Average Cost Data Introduction.pdf]

Phibbs, Ciaran S., Jennifer Y. Scott, Nicole E. Flores, Paul G. Barnett. *HERC's Outpatient Average Cost Dataset for VA Care: Fiscal Year 2013 Update*. Menlo Park, CA. VA Palo Alto, Health Economics Resource Center (2014).

[.\SectionsC1C4\HERC Outpatient Average Cost Dataset for VA Care - Fiscal Year 2013 Update.pdf]

Wagner, Todd H., Adam Chow, Pon Su and Paul G. Barnett. *HERC's Average Cost Datasets for VA Inpatient Care, FY1998-FY2013*. Menlo Park, CA. VA Palo Alto, Health Economics Resource Center (2014).

[.\SectionsC1C4\HERC Average Cost Datasets for VA Inpatient Care FY1998-FY2013.pdf]

³ File names [in brackets] are appended to the citation.

Sections D1-D2: Decision Support System

VIReC. *VIReC Research User Guide: VHA Decision Support System Clinical National Data Extracts (ABRIDGED VERSION FOR VA-HRS DATA)*. 2nd ed. Hines, IL: U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Health Services Research and Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (2009).

[.\SectionsD1D2\RUG-DSS-2nd-ed-ra-VA-HRS Abridged.pdf]

Sections E1-E5, G1-G4: Fee Basis, Non-VA Care

Smith, Mark W. and Adam Chow. *Non-VA Medical Care (Fee Basis) Data: A Guide for Researchers*. Menlo Park, CA. VA Palo Alto, Health Economics Resource Center (2013).

[.\SectionsE1E5_G1G4\HERC Guide to Fee Basis Data 2013.pdf]

Sections F1-F3: Pharmacy

VIReC. *VHA Pharmacy Prescription Data*. 2nd ed. Hines, IL: U.S. Dept. of Veterans Affairs, Health Services Research and Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (2008).

[.\SectionsF1F3\RUG-Pharmacy-2nd-Ed-CY08-RA.pdf]

Sections G5-G11, H1-H4: Inpatient, Inpatient Extended

VIReC. *VIReC Research User Guide: Fiscal Year 2014 VHA Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets*. Hines, IL: US Department of Veterans Affairs Health Services Research & Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (2015).

[.\SectionsG05G11_H1-H4\RUG-MedSAS-IP-FY14.pdf]

Sections J1-J2: Outpatient

VIReC. *VIReC Research User Guide: Fiscal Year 2014 VHA Medical SAS Outpatient Datasets and Inpatient Encounters Dataset*. Hines, IL: US Department of Veterans Affairs Health Services Research and Development Service, VA Information Resource Center (2015).

[.\SectionsJ1J2\RUG-MedSAS-OP-FY14.pdf]

Appendix B: Utilization Data Sources and VA-HRS SAS File Names

Description

VA-HRS utilization data files contain information on care provided by or paid for by VA. With the exception of two pharmacy datasets, the data cover care provided between Federal Fiscal Years 1999 and 2013. Pharmacy unit dose data are available since 2005 and IV data are available since 2003.

VA Utilization Data Source	VA-HRS Data File Name
Medical SAS Inpatient Datasets	vahrs_pm9913
	vahrs_pmo9913
	vahrs_xm9913
	vahrs_nm9913
	vahrs_pb9913
	vahrs_pbo9913
	vahrs_xb9913
	vahrs_nb9913
	vahrs_pp9913
	vahrs_ppo9913
	vahrs_xp9913
	vahrs_np9913
	vahrs_ps9913
	vahrs_xs9913
vahrs_ns9913	
Medical SAS Outpatient Datasets	vahrs_se9913
	vahrs_sf9913
Fee Basis (Non-VA Medical Care) Data	vahrs_fee_inpt9913
	vahrs_fee_ancil9913
	vahrs_fee_med9913
	vahrs_fee_pha9913
	vahrs_fee_vet9913
Pharmacy Benefits Management	vahrs_udrx0513
	vahrs_ivrx0313
	vahrs_oprx9913
DSS (MCA)	vahrs_dss_lab
	vahrs_dss_rad

Documentation

Existing VA publications provide extensive information about all of these data sources and are available from the VA Information Resource Center (<http://www.virec.research.va.gov/>)⁴.

⁴ Some material is available only on the VA intranet, (<http://vaww.virec.research.va.gov/>)

- **VA-HRS data variable information.** Variable information specific to the VA-HRS utilization data files including type, length, and label and missing values is provided in the codebook created by HRS and included in the distribution set.
- **Variables excluded from VA-HRS data.** In addition, *Excluded_Variables.pdf* provides information on variables in the source VA data that are not included in the VA-HRS data files. This file is included in the distribution set. [.\All\Excluded_Variables.pdf]

Notes on Fee Basis (Non-VA Medical Care) Data

Fee Basis data contain information on care veterans received in a non-VA facility that is paid for by the VA. The information is principally financial. Extensive information about the Non-VA Medical Care (formerly, Fee Basis) Data is available on the VA Health Economics Resource Center (HERC) internet website:

- HERC website: <http://www.herc.research.va.gov>
- HERC Non-VA Medical Care Data Overview: <http://www.herc.research.va.gov/include/page.asp?id=non-va>
- A guidebook to the data is available at: http://www.herc.research.va.gov/files/BOOK_761.pdf

About VA-HRS Fee Basis Data Files

VA-HRS Fee Basis Data files retain the structure and naming conventions of the original data. Demographic variables and administrative variables deemed to be of minimal use for research have been removed (see *Excluded Variables.xlsx*). In addition, data containing information about diagnosis or treatment of USC 38 Section 7332 protected medical conditions⁵ has been removed.

VA-HRS Fee Basis File Names:

vahrs_fee_inpt9913
vahrs_fee_ancil9913
vahrs_fee_med9913
vahrs_fee pha9913
vahrs_fee_vet9913

⁵ [http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:38%20section:7332%20edition:prelim\)%20OR%20\(granuleid:USC-prelim-title38-section7332\)&f=treesort&edition=prelim&num=0&jumpTo=true](http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:38%20section:7332%20edition:prelim)%20OR%20(granuleid:USC-prelim-title38-section7332)&f=treesort&edition=prelim&num=0&jumpTo=true)