

Introduction to the Research Databases of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality

This half-day workshop will provide an introduction to the research databases from the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). In particular, the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) and the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) will be described with specific applications to health economics research. A tentative agenda includes:

Introductions

A brief overview of AHRQ and its research databases will be provided as well as the introductions of presenters.

Powerful Data, Meaningful Answers: An Introduction to the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP)

This session will provide a 90-minute introduction to the Healthcare Cost and Utilization Project (HCUP) databases, software tools, and related products. HCUP is developed through a Federal-State-Industry partnership and sponsored by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). It is the largest collection of multi-year hospital care data in the United States. The databases enable research on a broad range of health issues, including cost and quality of health services, medical practice patterns, access to health care, and outcomes of treatments at the national, State, and local market levels. HCUP databases include the State Inpatient Databases, the Nationwide Inpatient Database, the Kids' Inpatient Database, the State Ambulatory Surgery Databases, and the State Emergency Department Databases. The session will also familiarize participants with several HCUP software tools created for use with administrative data including: Cost-to-Charge Ratio Files (converts hospital charges to cost estimates) and Hospital Market Structure File (contains various measures of hospital market competition).

The session includes a demonstration of HCUPnet—the free, online query system that provides instant access to national, regional, and state-level hospital inpatient statistics based on HCUP data (<http://hcup.ahrq.gov/HCUPnet.asp>). Participants will receive a free CD-ROM containing valuable resources that expand on topics covered in the session, including data file descriptions, research examples that use HCUP data, information on how to access documentation, and instructions on how to obtain HCUP data and tools.

Faculty: Herbert Wong, Ph.D., AHRQ
 Ryan Mutter, Ph.D., AHRQ

Break

Medical Expenditure Panel Survey

The purpose of this session is to facilitate the use of the Medical Expenditure Panel Survey Household Component (MEPS HC) public use data files for health economics and health services research. To meet this objective participants are provided with a general overview of the MEPS, a description of available data files, information about on-line data tools, and some examples of the type of research projects the MEPS data can support. Major changes have taken place in the Nation's health care delivery system over the last decade, including the introduction of new health insurance products and market-based cost containment initiatives. The MEPS is a vital national data resource designed to continually provide health services researchers, policymakers, health care administrators, businesses, and others with timely, comprehensive information about health care use and costs in the United States. Newly released MEPS public use files provide analysts with opportunities to create unique analytic files for policy relevant analyses in the field of health economics, such as studies of insurance take up and out-of-pocket expenditure burdens. In order to capture the unparalleled scope and detail of the MEPS HC, analysts need to understand the complexities of MEPS data files and data file linkages. This workshop will provide the knowledge necessary to formulate research plans utilizing the various MEPS HC files and linkage capabilities.

Faculty: Karen Beauregard, MHA, AHRQ
 Joel Cohen, Ph.D., AHRQ

Wrap-Up

Questions / Discussion