

Social History

***SOCIAL_HX* (Social History) data dictionary V3.0: March 11, 2013**

Overview:

New content area. The social history table includes various behavioral measures taken by health professionals, either during the clinic visit or often over the telephone or via questionnaires. These measures may include, but are not limited to, the use of tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs, as well as sexual behavior and contraceptive use, all of which carry immense privacy concerns. This table may yet be expanded to include exercise.

The tobacco use component (*tobacco*, *tobacco_type* variables) originally included in the Vital Signs table **have been deprecated**, and will be dropped from the V.S. table following user testing and acceptance of the Social_Hx table content.

This new content area is modeled after the CESR Social History specifications.

All variables are required. There are several free-text fields which may contain PHI. Many of these data elements could be considered particularly sensitive for personal, religious and/or political reasons. However, all VDW tables contain potentially sensitive data, and the HMORN has instituted policies, processes and procedures designed to safeguard *all* data. If a site is still concerned about this data, it is that site's responsibility to implement additional safeguards and security protocols. Although some sites have already expressed their intentions to do so, choosing to not populate data fields is strongly discouraged.

Please review the notes at the end of the data dictionary.

An in-depth discussion of background and justification is available elsewhere on the CRN portal.

Warning:

For KP sites: depending upon your source data, be cautious when populating the table – source data structures can be upgraded over time and some variables may become deprecated. Ex: A column that may once have been called 'IS_A_USER' may now be replaced with 'USER_Category'. Both columns may contain data, but “_Category” should be used over “IS_.” However, “IS_” should be used when “_Category” is null.

Also be alert for the presence of two additional tobacco variables: 'smoking_category' and 'smokeless_category'. These variables may offer greater detail, but they may also conflict with the general tobacco_category values. Use with caution.

Data Dictionary

Variable Name	Type and Length	Format	Label	Definition	Valid Values	General Notes	Note #
Enc_ID	Char (site dependant)			Unique encounter identification.	Unique to each site. Encounter ID identifies unique encounters.	Use to link to utilization. There may not be an actual visit associated with the collection of this data.	
MRN	Char (site specific)			Used to identify unique individuals across files.	Unique to each site.		
Contact_Date	N(4)	Date.		Date of encounter / data collection	SAS Date	Date the information was collected	

Variable Name	Type and Length	Format	Label	Definition	Valid Values	General Notes	Note #
Tobacco	Num(3)			Tobacco Status	1 = current user 2 = never 3 = quit/former user 4 = passive / environmental / second-hand (5 = environmental exposure: no longer used) 6 = not asked 7 = conflicting	The original Vital Signs variable, now deprecated. Do not include this on the Social_Hx table. This information is kept solely for reference. Include tobacco status as of the visit date. Unknown values should be left blank. The “not asked” value should be used only when it is a valid response from your source data. The conflicting value should be used when you receive tobacco information from multiple sources that disagree.	1
Tobacco_Type	Num(3)			Tobacco other than cigarettes used	1 = Cigarettes only 2 = Other tobacco only 3 = Cigarettes and other tobacco 4 = None	The original Vital Signs variable, now deprecated. Do not include this on the Social_Hx table. This information is kept solely for reference. Indicate whether the tobacco use was something other than cigarettes. Unknown values should be left blank.	1
Tobacco_User	Char(1)			Is patient a tobacco user?	Y=Yes / Current N=Never	Replaces “Tobacco” variable.	

Variable Name	Type and Length	Format	Label	Definition	Valid Values	General Notes	Note #
					Q=Quit / Former P=Passive /Environmental / Second-hand X=Not Asked I=Infrequent U=Unknown, Missing	Current tobacco user? Include tobacco status as of the visit date. Unknown values should be left blank. The “not asked” value should be used only when it is a valid response from your system.	
Tobacco_Used_Years	Char (site specific)			Number of Years Tobacco has been used	Null = Missing Text variable allows non-numeric responses.		
Tobacco_Pak_Per_Dy	Char (site specific)			Number of packs smoked per day	Null = Missing Text variable allows non-numeric responses.		
Tobacco_Comment	Char (site specific)			Comment about Tobacco Use	Null = Missing	Be careful – this field may contain sensitivePHI.	
Smoking_Quit_Date	Num(4)			Date of Quit Smoking	SAS date; Null = Missing		
Smokeless_Quit_Date	Num(4)			Date of Quit Smokeless	SAS date; Null = Missing		
Cigarettes_YN	Char(1)			Tobacco Cigarette Use	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Pipes_YN	Char(1)			Tobacco Pipe Use	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Cigars_YN	Char(1)			Tobacco Cigar Use	Y = Yes		

Variable Name	Type and Length	Format	Label	Definition	Valid Values	General Notes	Note #
					N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Snuff_YN	Char(1)			Tobacco Snuff Use	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Chew_YN	Char(1)			Tobacco Chew Use	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Unspecified_Tobacco	Char(1)			Tobacco type used is not specified, or is of a type not specified in the _YN list above.	Y = Yes Blank = missing (default)	This variable was added to cover all possibilities of unknown, uncertain or unspecified tobacco use.	
Alcohol_User	Char(1)			Is patient an alcohol drinker?	Y = Yes N = No Q = Quit / Former X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing	Current alcohol drinker?	2
Alcohol_Oz_Per_Wk	Char (site specific)			Number of ounces alcohol consumed per week	Text format allows non-numeric responses	Fluid ounces consumed weekly	
Alcohol_Comment	Char (site specific)			Comment about alcohol use		Be careful – this field may contain sensitive PHI.	
Ill_Drug_User	Char(1)			Is patient an illicit drug user	Y = Yes N = No	“Illicit” drug user?	2, 5

Variable Name	Type and Length	Format	Label	Definition	Valid Values	General Notes	Note #
					Q = Quit / Former X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
IV_Drug_User_YN	Char(1)			Is patient IV drug user	Y = Yes N = No Q = Quit / Former X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing	Intravenous drug user? Does not include infusion/cancer treatment drugs.	2
Illicit_Drug_Freq	Char (site specific)			Frequency of illicit drug use			3
Illicit_Drug_Comment	Char (site specific)			Comment about illicit drug use		Be careful – this field may contain sensitive PHI.	
Sexually_Actv	Char(1)			Is patient sexually active	Y = Yes N = No W= Not Currently (Was) X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Female_Partner_YN	Char(1)			Has a female sex partner?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Male_Partner_YN	Char(1)			Has a male sex partner?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Condom_YN	Char(1)			Condom use?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		

Variable Name	Type and Length	Format	Label	Definition	Valid Values	General Notes	Note #
Pill_YN	Char(1)			Birth control pill use?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Diaphragm_YN	Char(1)			Diaphragm use?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
IUD_YN	Char(1)			IUD use?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Surgical_YN	Char(1)			Surgical birth control?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		4
Spermicide_YN	Char(1)			Spermicide Use?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Implant_YN	Char(1)			Birth control implant?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Rhythm_YN	Char(1)			Use rhythm method?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Injection_YN	Char(1)			Birth control injection?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		

Variable Name	Type and Length	Format	Label	Definition	Valid Values	General Notes	Note #
Sponge_YN	Char(1)			Birth control sponge?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
BC_Inserts_YN	Char(1)			Birth control inserts?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Abstinence_YN	Char(1)			Birth control via abstinence?	Y = Yes N = No X = Not Asked U = Unknown, missing		
Sex_Comment	Char (site specific)			Comment on sexual activity		Be careful – this field may contain sensitive PHI.	
Years_Education	Char (site specific)			Number of years of education completed	Null = Missing Text variable allows non-numeric responses.	Free text.	6

Notes:

1. Deprecated variable – do not create/include/use: kept here for reference, this is the name/coding/format originally described in the vital stats data dictionary.
2. “Quit/Former” are not always standard response categories for these variables but are being included in case it is available.
3. At this time, we cannot set standards for coding for frequency, but encourage sites to be thoughtful and consistent when populating this variable. Consider categories such as: daily, weekly, monthly? Twice/daily, thrice/daily? N times per week?
4. To include vasectomy, hysterectomy (complete? partial?)
5. “Illicit drug use” can be considered “illegal” drug use. We are not currently distinguishing between marijuana use and other drugs. That may change in the future, legally and politically. We may sponsor discussions to determine sites able to distinguish drug type currently.
6. Arguably not a ‘social behavior’ indicator, but this data element is contained in some corresponding data sources. An informal survey shows this can be populated anywhere from 1% - 12% or more of available records. This is a free text field which includes numbers (as numeric digits or spelled out) and words (such as “high school,” “GED,” “bachelors,” “law degree,” “master electrician,” etc.)

Overview:

The Vitals work group considers it important that the VDW include tobacco use data, because tobacco is strongly related to many chronic diseases, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and respiratory disease. Studies in these topic areas would benefit from being able to take account of tobacco use; additionally, tobacco cessation is an area of interest among HMORN researchers. For these reasons we specified tobacco for inclusion in the V3 Vitals Table.

Version V3 of the VDW includes two derived tobacco variables. But the consensus from data managers and programmers is that tobacco is not a good fit in the Vitals Table. At most sites patients’ tobacco use is updated only infrequently, and in contrast with other vitals data is not associated with specific encounters. This has led to sites having problems mapping tobacco data into the Vitals table.

For example, many records will contain Vital Signs and no smoking data, or the record will contain ONLY smoking data. Also, it is sometimes difficult to link these data to a specific visit.

Other Social History data:

The electronic medical records of most HMORN sites contain social history information on tobacco use, alcohol use, sexual behavior and contraception use, and illicit drug use. Although we haven't conducted a survey, Vitals group members think investigators would welcome the availability of lifestyle/behavioral variables in the VDW. Programmers have received requests for these types of data. We do not think it would be feasible to add alcohol, sexual behavior, and illicit drug use to our current vitals table, given the issues already observed with the tobacco variables. Creation of a new table would allow these data could be maintained in a standardized, research-ready format.

Additional Background Information:

The CESR work group has already specified a social history table. CESR sites are currently building this table. Many sites belong to both CESR and HMORN. Rather than specifying a brand new social history table, we propose to adopt the CESR table with only minimal modification. The only modification that we propose is the creation of four status-use variables (*tobacco_user*, *alcohol_user*, *ill_drug_user*, *sexually_actv*), which addresses issues with deprecated variables. All other social history variables are taken straight from CESR.

Contact information:

Please contact the VDW Vital Signs working group for questions and suggestions. There may or may not be a Social History working group that takes this work forward, but for now it is a function of the vital signs group. Contact information can be found on the HMORN website (www.hmoresearchnetwork.org) or by emailing vdw-vitalsigns@lists.centerforhealthstudies.org.

Related content

 VDW SocialHX QA 030812.zip

Comments (0)