AGENCY FOR HEALTHCARE RESEARCH AND QUALITY

MEPS-HC
Prescribed Medicines (PMED) File

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PMED File Structure

- **Each record represents a unique instance of prescribed medicine acquisition (fill or refill) and the characteristics of the drug.**

- **File includes medicines prescribed, obtained, and reported.**

- **The file incorporates data collected in the Household and Pharmacy Components (a subcomponent of the Medical Provider Component).**

Household Component (HC)

- **Medicine name**
- **Number of times acquired in the round**
- **Associated condition(s)**
- **Date first used**
- **Pharmacy information**

Pharmacy Component (PC)

- **Requires written permission from household members**

- **Involves telephone/mail/email contact with the pharmacy**

- **Asks for "patient profile" to include:**

  - **Drug name**

  - **National Drug Code (NDC) number**

  - **Drug characteristics**

  - **Payers and amounts of payment**

Editing HC and PC Data

- **Household Component: Number of fills**

- **Pharmacy Component**
  - **Missing NDC number**
  - **Missing third-party payer (based on HC)**
  - **Missing or unrealistically low or high prices**
  - **Missing payments**

Combining HC and PC

- No common identifier is shared by HC and PC.
- A code (Generic Product Identifier, or GPI) is assigned to each HC and PC drug to facilitate matching.

  - Machine (70%) and human coders (30%) for HC
  - NDC (95%) and human coders (5%) for PC

- Post-match editing is performed.
- Utilization is based on household data.
- Payments are based almost entirely on pharmacy data.

Drug Characteristics (PC)

Characteristics included for each acquisition:

- **Medication name**

- **NDC number**

- **Quantity dispensed (10, 30, 50, . . .)**

- **Form (capsule, tablet, liquid, cream, . . .)**

- **Strength (10, 200, . . .)**

- **Unit of measurement for form (ounces, . . .)**

- **Unit of measurement for strength (mg, mL, . . .)**

Other Variables

Additional information included for each acquisition

- **Round**
- **When the drug was first taken**
- **Pharmacy type(s)**
- **Condition(s) associated with the drug (by linking with the medical conditions file)**
- **Days supplied (since 2010)**
- **Sources and amounts of payment**
- **Total payment**

Multum Lexicon Variables

- **Each record has two types of Multum Lexicon variables:**
  - **TCn (therapeutic class: 1, 2, and 3)**
    - **TCnSn (therapeutic sub-class)**
    - **TCnSn_n (therapeutic sub-sub-class)**
  - **RXDRGNAM (beginning in 2013)**
- **Drugs can have multiple therapeutic classes if they are combinations of active ingredients.**
- **For 2013 and earlier, RXDRGNAM and TC variables can be found as an addendum file at the MEPS website (MEPS HC-068).**

Record Identifier Variables

- **RXRECIDX – Unique identifier for each record in the file**

- **LINKIDX – Drug-round-level ID that can be used to link a prescribed medicine event to the Medical Conditions Files**

- **DRUGIDX/RXNDC – Drug-level IDs**

DUPERSID	DRUGIDX	PURCHRD	LINKIDX	RXRECIDX
2710001101	2710001101002	1	2710001101002103	2710001101002103001
2710001101	2710001101002	1	2710001101002103	2710001101002103002
2710001101	2710001101002	2	2710001101002203	2710001101002203001

How to Link PMED File With Medical Condition Files

- **Household Component Full-Year files** ⓘ
  Expenditure and utilization data for the calendar year from several rounds of data collection.
  - **Full-Year Consolidated Data files**
  - **Full-Year Population Characteristics files**
  - **Medical Conditions files**
  - **Risk Adjustment Scores files**
  - **Employment Variables file**
  - **Jobs files**
  - **Person Round Plan files**
  - **Longitudinal Data files**
  - **Supplemental Variables files (1996-2000)**
  - **Health Insurance Plan Abstraction file (1996)**
  - **Long Term Care file (1998)**
- **Household Component Event files** ⓘ
  Data for the calendar year on unique household-reported medical events.
  - **Prescribed Medicines files** — **PMED Files**
  - **Dental Visits files**
  - **Other Medical Expenses files**
  - **Hospital Inpatient Stays files**
  - **Emergency Room Visits files**
  - **Outpatient Visits files**
  - **Office-Based Medical Provider Visits files**
  - **Home Health files**
  - **Appendix to MEPS Event files** — **Condition-event link file (CLINK)**

Sidebar:
- :: What's New
- :: Mailing List
- :: Discussion Forum
- :: Participants' Corner

Linking PMED File to Medical Conditions File

PMED File

DUPERSID	DRUGIDX	PURCHRD	LINKIDX	RXRECIDX
2710001101	2710001101002	1	2710001101002103	2710001101002103001
2710001101	2710001101002	1	2710001101002103	2710001101002103002
2710001101	2710001101002	2	2710001101002203	2710001101002203001

CLINK File

DUPERSID	CONDIDX	EVNTIDX	EVENTYPE
2710001101	2710001101001	2710001101002103	8
2710001101	2710001101001	2710001101002203	8
2710001101	2710001101002	2710001101200501	1

Medical Conditions File

DUPERSID	CONDIDX	ICD10CDX
2710001101	2710001101001	E11
2710001101	2710001101002	I10

- **In Condition link file, EVNTIDX are the same as LINKIDX for PMED events (EVENTYPE=8)**
  - **Merge the link file with PMED file using the LINKIDX variable, after renaming EVNTIDX as LINKIDX in the link file.**
  - **Merge with the Medical Conditions file using the CONDIDX variable.**

PMED File Peculiarities

■ **Different meanings of imputation flags**

    ■ **RXFLG**

    ■ **PCIMPFLG**

    ■ **IMPFLAG**

    ■ **INPCFLG**

■ **No total charge variable**

   ► **No rebate or discount information**

■ **No date of service**

Trend Analysis

- **Beginning in 1996, the PMED file has been released annually.**
- **How to interpret year-to-year changes in utilization and expenditures?**
  - **Policy change**
  - **Other changes (e.g., demographics)**
  - **Improvements in MEPS PMED data editing methodology (2007–2008, 2017, 2020)**
  - **MEPS instrument design change (since spring of 2018)**

Trend Analysis (Continued)

- **Be cautious with the types of comparisons you make before and after 2007/2008, 2017/2018, or 2020.**

- **Read the documentation for each year of data you are using.**

- **Read the latest Methodology Report #37** (https://meps.ahrq.gov/data_files/publications/mr37/mr37.shtml).

Statistical Reports and Applied Research

AHRQ regularly produces and posts findings from the PMED data.

- ## Statistical Briefs

  Wu X, Moriya AS, and Miller GE. *Average Annual Total Expenses, Total Utilization, and Sources of Payment for Outpatient Prescription Opioids in the U.S. Adult Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population, 2021-2022*. Statistical Brief #559. February 2025. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. https://meps.ahrq.gov/data_files/publications/st559/stat559.shtml

  Ahrnsbrak R and Stagnitti MN. *Average Expenditures per Prescription Antidepressant Fill in the U.S. Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population by Select Sociodemographic Characteristics, 2013 and 2018.* Statistical Brief #538. November 2021. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. https://meps.ahrq.gov/data_files/publications/st538/stat538.shtml

- ## Methodology Reports

  Abdus S, Hill SC, Ahrnsbrak R. "Outpatient Prescription Drugs: Data Collection and Editing in the 2021 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey". Methodology Report #37. January 2024. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. https://meps.ahrq.gov/data_files/publications/mr37/mr37.shtml

- ## Research Findings

  Bernard D, Machlin SR, Fang Z, and Cohen J. *Average Annual Opioid Use among Adults Treated for Conditions Associated with Chronic Pain versus Other Conditions, 2013-2015.* Research Finding #43. August 2019. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Rockville, MD. https://meps.ahrq.gov/data_files/publications/rf43/rf43.shtml

Thank you!

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