MEPS – HC
PRESCRIBED MEDICINES FILE

Salam Abdus, PhD

PMED File Structure

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

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

- **Incorporates data collected in the household and pharmacy components**

Household Component (HC)

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

Pharmacy Component (PC)

- **Need written permission from the household members**

- **Telephone and mail contact with Pharmacy**

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

  - **Drug name**

  - **National drug code (NDC)**

  - **Drug characteristics**

  - **Date filled**

  - **Payers and amounts of payment**

- **Sample of about 8,000 pharmacies per year**

Editing HC and PC data

- **HC: number of fills**

- **PC**
  - **missing NDC**
  - **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 (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

- Utilization based on household data
- Payments based almost entirely on pharmacy data

Drug Characteristics (PC)

Characteristics included for each acquisition:

- **Medication name**
- **National drug code (NDC)**
- **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**
- **Type(s) of pharmacy**
- **Condition(s) associated with the drug (by linking with the medical conditions file)**
- **Days supplied (since 2010)**

- **Sources and amounts of payment**
- **Total payment**

Record Identifier Variables

- **RXRECIDX – Uniquely identifies each record on the file**

- **LINKIDX – Drug-round-level ID that can be used to link a PM event to other MEPS event files**

- **DRUGIDX/RXNDC – Drug-level IDs**

Multum Lexicon Variables

- **Each record has 3 types of Multum Lexicon variables**

  - **PREGCAT (pregnancy category)**

  - **TCn (therapeutic class: 1, 2, and 3)**
  - **TCnSn (therapeutic sub-class)**
  - **TCnSn_n (therapeutic sub-sub-class)**

  - **RXDRGNAM (beginning in 2013)**
  - **For 2012 and earlier, RXDRGNAM and corrected TC and PREGCAT variables can be found as an addendum file at the MEPS website (MEPS HC-068: Multum Lexicon Addendum Files to MEPS Prescribed Medicines Files 1996-2013)**

PMED File Peculiarities

- **Meaning of imputation flags is different**
  - **RXFLG**
  - **PCIMPFLG**
  - **IMPFLAG**
  - **INPCFLG**

- **No total charge variable**
  - ► **NO rebate or discount information**

- **No date of service**

Trend Analysis

- **PMED file released yearly beginning in 1996**

- **How will you interpret year-to-year changes?**
  - **Policy change**
  - **Other real change**
  - **Change in MEPS methodology (especially 2007-2008 and 2017)**

Trend Analysis Caveats

- Be cautious with the type of comparisons you make before and after 2007 / 2008 and before and after 2017.

- Consider techniques to smooth or stabilize trends, such as pooling time periods

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

- Read Methodology Report #29

Statistical Reports & Applied Research

AHRQ regularly produces and posts findings from the PMED data

- ## Statistical Briefs

Miller GE, Moriya AS. Any Use and Frequent Use of Opioids among Non-Elderly Adults in 2015-2016, by Socioeconomic Characteristics. Statistical Brief #516. September 2018.

Stagnitti MN. Total Expenses, Total Utilization, Distribution by Source of Payment and Average Total and Out-of-Pocket Payments for Outpatient Prescription Opioids in the U.S. Adult Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population, 2015. Statistical Brief #505. November 2017.

- ## Methodology Reports

Hill SC, Roemer M, Stagnitti MN. Outpatient Prescription Drugs: Data Collection and Editing in the 2011 Medical Expenditure Panel Survey. Methodology Report #29. March 2014.

- ## Working Papers

Zodet M., Hill S.C., Zuvekas S., Evaluating an Alternative Data Source for Editing MEPS Drug Prices, Working Paper No. 12004, July 2012.

Thank you!

Salam.Abdus@AHRQ.hhs.gov