



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services



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MEPS – HC PRESCRIBED MEDICINES FILE

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PMED File Structure

- Each record represents a unique prescribed medicine acquisition 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**
- **Whether obtained for free**
- **Self-filer status**



Pharmacy Component (PC)

- Need signed permission form
- Telephone and mail contact
- Ask for computer printout or “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
- Date the drug was first taken
- Type(s) of pharmacy
- Condition(s) associated with the drug

- Sources and amounts of payment
- Total payment



Multum Lexicon Variables

- **Each record has 2 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)
- **Multum Lexicon website:**
 - www.multum.com/Lexicon.html



PMED File Peculiarities

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

- **No total charge variable**

- **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)**



Trend Analysis Caveats

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

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.

- **Research findings**

Sarpong E. and Chevarley F. M., Trends in the Pharmaceutical Treatment of Asthma in Adults, 1998 to 2009. Research Findings No. 33. July 2012.

- **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.