The CDC's National Death Index, and the joint project with the Department of Defense / Veteran's Administration

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**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
National Center for Health Statistics**

What is the National Death Index?

- **It is a database of ALL deaths in the United States.**

- **It currently spans 1979 to 2011**

- **It is culled only from state death certificates. No other sources.**

- **It includes the 50 states, NYC, DC, Puerto Rico, and the USVI.**

What data is in the NDI?

- There are over 70 million records in the NDI. Approximately 2.5 million records are added annually.

- It includes first/MI/last names, father's surname (if female), SSN, month/day/year of birth, age, sex, race, marital status, state of residence, state of birth.

NDI data cont.

- **The NDI provides clients with date and state of death, the death certificate number, and cause of death.**

- **Cause of death includes the underlying cause of death plus the multiple cause of death codes (up to 20).**

- **ICD9 or ICD10 coding (date dependent).**

Main restriction to NDI use

- **It can only be used for health and medical research and purposes.**

- **No administrative or legal purposes.**

- **The data are highly confidential, and may not be re-released without stripping all identifiable information, nor without written permission from the NDI.**

What databases have linked to the NDI?

- **Occupational health cohorts**

- **Disease and non-disease registries**

- **Comparative effectiveness studies**

- **Post-marketing drug surveillance**

- **Clinical Trials**

- **General population studies**

- **National surveys**

Some of our NDI clients

- **Hospitals and clinics**

- **Health insurers and managed care organizations**

- **State health departments**

- **Pharmaceutical companies**

- **Oil & chemical industry**

- **Academia**

- **Disease registries**

- **VA and DoD**

- **Other federal agencies**

Suicides in the Military

- **In recent years, there has been a lot of media attention focused on suicides in the military**

- **This attention has resulted in several Congressional inquiries into the problem.**

- **Both DoD and VA have been ordered to assess the magnitude of the problem and reduce the numbers of active duty and veteran deaths due to suicide.**

DoD and VA history with the NDI

- **Since 1983 we have had about 64-65 VA studies and 18-20 DoD studies which have matched to the NDI.**

- **About 7 of these have focused on suicides among military personnel.**

- **In particular, the VA has been studying suicides for several years.**

DoD/VA studies on suicide

- **1998-0036 The Suicide Risk Associated with Clozapine Treatment of Veterans with Schizophrenia**

- **2000-0041 Case-Control Study of Veteran Suicides**

- **2001-0039 Quality of Mental Health Care and Suicide Risk in Psychiatric Patients**

- **2002-0013 Suicides in Treatment-Seeking Pathological Gamblers, Obesity and Diabetes in Treatment-Seeking Pathological Gamblers.**

- **2004-0037 Quality of Mental Health Care and Suicide Risk in Psychiatric Outpatients**

- **2011-0017 Mortality Assessment for the Dept of Veterans Affairs**

- **2012-0036 DOD and VA Mortality Data Repository**

DoD/VA Mortality Data Repository

- **Recognition in the military that a coordinated effort was needed.**

- **Past experience with the NDI raised awareness that we were the source of information they needed.**

- **A joint project would also eliminate redundancy in other areas of DoD/VA health research.**

DoD/VA Mortality Data Repository cont.

- A combined file of all DoD and VA records matched against the NDI

- Altogether around 26,042,159 military records, on 53 discs.

- Just completed and mailed back to them last week.

How will the data be used?

- **DoD/VA will set up their own linked database and Governing Council to review all internal research requests for the data.**

- **Eventually, outside researchers may also gain access, but with a joint review process with NDI Advisors.**

- **Initial emphasis on suicide research, but over time many other health research topics will be examined.**

NCHS benefits as well

- **Flag our mortality records with veteran status, after DoD/VA identify all their "true" matches**
  - This will permit aggregate statistical analyses using veteran status, that we have not been able to do.
  - This will also allow similar analyses from the public mortality files.

Benefits, cont.

- **DoD/VA will send us their out-of-country death records, going back to the Korean War.**

- **They will thereafter send us these records on a monthly basis.**

- **For a long time we have sought to acquire these records.**
  - **These records will complete our mortality files.**
  - **They will be used only for statistical purposes.**

DoD/VA death record content

- Name
- Social Security Number
- Date of Birth
- Age (at death)
- Gender
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Marital Status
- Home of Record

- Incident Type Code
- Casualty Status
- Casualty Category
- Cause of Death or Injury
- Casualty Event Type
- Casualty City
- Casualty State
- Casualty Country
- Incident Date
- Date of Death

Benefit for the states

- **This death information will aid the states in flagging birth records as deceased (process yet to be determined).**

- **This will prevent fraud and abuse (e.g. identity theft) of government records.**

- **This information will only be used for statistical purposes.**

- **The DoD/VA records will not be retained by the states.**