



# HRSNews

July 2013

## Note from Director/Associate Directors

Our latest efforts to stay at the cutting edge of the science of survey research include a new proposal to collect venous blood from HRS respondents in their homes and an ongoing project to link the health care records from Veterans Affairs (VA) health care providers to the HRS data of respondents who are military veterans.

The new blood collection grant proposal was submitted in early July and was the result of a team effort led especially by David Weir, Jessica Faul, and external co-investigator Eileen Crimmins. Obtaining venous blood will allow us to conduct a range of new assays not possible with dried blood spots and to create a repository to analyze blood in the future when new tests for things like changes in the brain from cognitive decline may become available. A key focus of the current assays will be the aging of the immune system, which is both accessible through blood and potentially important for aging of other bio-systems.

The VA-HRS data linkage project is a new project funded jointly by the Department of Veterans Affairs and the HRS that aims to increase the opportunities for research on the health and health care of those who have served in the military. Led by Associate Director Ken Langa, who regularly sees patients in the Ann Arbor VA, this will attempt to identify and link VA health care data from 1992 through the present for the approximately 7,500 HRS respondents who have told us that they served in the military. Data linkage for deceased HRS veterans is already underway, and we mailed consent forms earlier this month to the approximately 4,000 living HRS veterans. We expect that the linked dataset that results from this project will be a “one-of-a-kind” resource to answer some pressing health policy questions important both to the VA and to the Medicare program.

In typical HRS fashion, we are now busy preparing data from the 2012 wave for public release, while at the same time finalizing a comprehensive review and changes to the survey questionnaire for the 2014 wave.

Lastly, several new folks have joined the HRS team, and we will be holding a reception to welcome all of them on **Thursday, July 25** from 2:00-3:00 in 3038 Thompson. Please join us if you can!

David, Mary Beth, and Ken

## HRS Program News by Maggie Levenstein

In September, 2011 SRC was awarded \$4.4 million from the Sloan Foundation's Working Longer Program to create a new dataset, CenHRS. CenHRS will measure characteristics of the current and prior employers of HRS respondents. These characteristics are to be constructed from administrative and survey data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The project is led here at Michigan by Maggie Levenstein, Matthew Shapiro, and David Weir, with partners at Cornell (John Abowd) and the U.S. Census Bureau (Kristin McCue).

Creating a link between the HRS and Census data is a long-standing aim of the Michigan Census Research Data Center (MCRDC) project. Undertaking this linkage was a component of the original National Science Foundation project establishing the MCRDC. Finding better ways to use administrative records is an important objective of the Census Bureau's current strategic plan; progress in this area has the potential to reduce costs and respondent burden and to improve the quality of data. The experience in creating CenHRS will provide valuable insights that can also be applied in the creation of analogous data for Census Bureau surveys like the Survey of Income and Program Participation.

CenHRS will include contextual variables relating to a broad range of characteristics of each firm at which HRS respondents worked during their lifetime. The project will develop new measures of employer characteristics, in particular those relevant to the employment and health of older Americans. Project researchers will create measures incorporating information on employee turnover and tenure; earnings distribution, age and other demographic characteristics of the firm's workforce; business characteristics such as firm and establishment size, growth, and export activity; and measures based on geography such as distance to work

For the last year and a half, the CenHRS team has been working with both Census and HRS data to prepare for this linkage. Nada Wasi, Assistant Research Scientist, joined the group last fall. She has been working to create consistent standardized work histories from HRS respondent data as well as efficient and manageable linking algorithms. Yi Zhang, a recent graduate of the University of Michigan, and Sophie Buchmueller, an undergraduate at Carleton College, are both assisting Nada with this work. Mary Cooter, a graduate student in biostatistics working with T. Raghunathan, is analyzing which HRS respondents provide consent to link their data to SSA administrative data. SSA-provided Employer ID numbers, when available, are expected to significantly improve the quality of the match between HRS respondents and their employing firms in Census data. Mary and Raghu expect that their analysis will inform our modeling of this linkage and any necessary imputation of employer matches. Aaron Flaaen and Isaac Sorkin, two graduate students in economics, have been working in the MCRDC creating novel measures of firm characteristics, including the multinational status of a firm and whether the firm appears to be in distress and likely to shed workers. Peter Hudomiet, another doctoral student in economics, is comparing respondent and administrative measures of earnings to better understand measurement error that arises in both sources of data. Lingwen Zheng, a graduate student in economics at Cornell, has been working in the Cornell Census Research Data Center to create measures of the age distribution of employees. Each of these measures is currently being tested with links to a Census data set, the Survey of Income and Program Participation, in anticipation of its linkage to HRS respondent data. Please note that much of this research must be done, for confidentiality protection, in the windowless rooms of the MICDA and Census RDC enclaves. If you see one of our research team looking especially pale, please make sure to show them the way out of doors.

## Data Products by Theresa Norgard

The data processing group is working on the 2012 Early release. They have also done production data for the 2013 Internet survey and have spent a fair amount of time investigating data problems and issues from 2010. Our two new data processors -- Kate Mikesell and Chris Plotts -- are welcome additions to the group and have been a pleasure to work with.

## Instrument Development by Kathy Terrazas

The internet study is in the field now. Most folks seem to like it. We are now officially in pre-production for 2014 working on design changes, cuts, and module development. We added two new regular employees to our team -- a new tester and a new programmer (see personnel changes). Dorothy Nordness has also joined our group working with Mary Beth to handle the design and testing of the experimental modules.

## SRO by Heidi Guyer

After a 52-week data collection period, the last interview of HRS 2012 was completed on April 21, 2013. We are very pleased to report an overall response rate of 88.8% and a total of 21,889 completed interviews! Additionally, the response rate among the new respondents that were recruited in 2010/11 ("new panel") was 90%- quite an achievement! We are currently finishing the usual post-data collection activities which include logging additional SAQs and SSA forms that we receive, sanitizing and testing all of the physical and measures and biomarker equipment that has been returned from the field, processing the dried blood spot results and sending result letters to respondents (to name a few). Several HRS ancillary studies are well underway including the HRS Internet study, the HRS 2016 Screening Initiative study, the VA Mail survey, and several additional activities that will be administered in the fall. Additionally, HRS 2014 pre-production activities are already underway with the goal of launching data collection the first week of March 2014. HRS-SRO staff are keeping busy across the street at the Perry Building!

## Dissemination by Amanda Sonnega

Jessica Faul and Amanda Sonnega led the HRS summer workshop June 3-7. Participants reported back to us that it was a very worthwhile experience. Because of construction noise, the lectures this year were held in the videoconferencing room in the basement, a surprisingly pleasant and cozy venue. The lectures were recorded using Centra (on-line learning software) for use by researchers at SSA. Thanks again to Mary Beth Ofstedal, Ken Langa, Jacqui Smith, Lindsay Ryan, Helen Levy, Charlie Brown, Lauren Nicholas, Peter Hudomiet (a graduate student with Bob) for great lectures and Kathleen McGarry for a tour de force on the new family data. Also thanks to Rebecca Gatward who gave a lecture on SRO procedures. Thanks to Ryan McCammon for leading out the lab on data analysis and to Megan Turf for providing materials on merging. Orla Hayden and Mike Moldoff led the afternoon lab session on the RAND HRS, and Drystan Phillips led the lab on the Metadata Repository. The RAND sessions were especially well-received. Many thanks to Joyce Sisung, who did her usual fantastic job pulling together the materials and readying the room and food. Last but not least (truly) thanks to the folks who helped out in the lab: Nada Wasi, Chichun Fang, Halimah Hassan, Eduardo Galvan, and Beth Simmert (summer

intern from WSU working with Amanda and Jessica) and to Janet Keller, as always, for great computer help.



HRS Summer Workshop 2013

### Administration by Cathy Liebowitz

Foremost, HRS Administration welcomed Lekisha Maxwell to the Administrative Team as a Contract & Grant Specialist in May. Lekisha will be working on the HRS project providing post-award support and restricted data support. She is already doing a wonderful job learning about our work environment and getting up to speed with HRS project financials. She's plunging ahead with restricted data access processing as well.

During the first 6 months of calendar 2013, the HRS Administrative Support Team continues to churn proposals. A total of 11 new proposals were submitted during this time. There were no new project awards, but 5 Non-Competitive Renewals were received.

In addition to grant seeking, HRS AST worked with faculty to apply for and obtain tuition support for Academic Year 2013-2014 for 18 GSRAs within our program. We have participated in the recruitment and hiring of numerous students, temporary employees, and 5 regular staff position. We have responded to the space surveys; prepared financial projections through FY2014; assisted with meetings, travel and procurement; assisted with the Summer Institute workshop; handled facilities and other special requests; assisted with outreach; and, processed data access requests for sensitive health data, genetic data, and restricted access data.

### HRS in the News by Amanda Sonnega

Michael Hurd, Paco Martorell, Adeline Delavande, Kathleen Mullen, and Ken Langa reported on the monetary costs of dementia in a paper published in the April 4, 2013 issue of the New England Journal of

Medicine. The paper received widespread media attention, including a very good write-up in the New York Times. According to the Times, "The study used information collected over almost a decade on nearly 11,000 people from a large database called the Health and Retirement Study, considered a gold standard among researchers on aging issues."

Cost of care included self-reported out-of-pocket expenses for care, nursing home care, and the value of informal care. A common way to measure the cost of informal care is to think of it as the lost potential wages the care giver could earn if he or she were not providing care. Another way to estimate this opportunity cost is to assign it the value of the cost of the equivalent service, such as a home health aide. The annual cost of caring for a person with dementia was between \$41,689 and \$56,290, depending on how informal care was valued. They note that these costs are likely to double within the next thirty years and that the financial burden is higher than that of heart disease and cancer.

View the whole story [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/04/health/dementia-care-costs-are-soaring-study-finds.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit\\_th\\_20130404&r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/04/04/health/dementia-care-costs-are-soaring-study-finds.html?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=edit_th_20130404&r=0)

## Personnel Changes

HRS continues to grow! We are pleased to welcome:

**Lekisha Maxwell**, a new Contract & Grant Specialist for HRS. Previously, Lekisha worked as a Senior Accounting Assistant in the Department of Economics at the University for five years. Lekisha has a Master's degree in business administration with a concentration in strategic leadership from Walsh College. She loves to spend time with her family and friends, ballroom dancing, attending concerts and watching Lifetime movies after church on Sundays.



**Kate Mikesell** joined HRS as a Research Area Specialist Associate. She will be working as a programmer in data out. Previously, Kate worked as a Data/Project Manager for three years. Before joining HRS, she worked in the Education and Well Being Program. Kate has experience with survey design, preparing data files and documentation. She has experience with SAS and Illume and is familiar with Blaise. Kate has a degree in English literature from the University of Michigan and a computer science degree from Eastern Michigan University. In her free time, Kate enjoys spending time with her family, and doing Ashtanga yoga. She is also working on a master's degree in applied statistics at Eastern Michigan.

**Christopher Plotts** is a Research Area Specialist Intermediate. He will be working as a programmer in data out. Previously, Christopher worked as an Application Programmer/Analyst at the University of Michigan Medical School in the Human Genetics Department. He also worked as a SAS Programmer Associate at the American Institutes for Research, working on Project Talent. Chris graduated from Bowling Green State University in 2006 (B.A. in Econ and B.S. in Math). He enjoys brewing a variety of beers for family and friends to love or hate. Finally, in his quest to be the consummate geek, he plays D&D with his wife and friends and is an avid PC gamer.



**Rhymney Weidner** has joined HRS as an Applications Programmer/Analyst. Previously, Rhymney worked as a Programmer Analyst with Tetra Tech for three years. She has experience with web application development, XML, Java, DotNetNuke CMS, SQL, and ASP.Net. Rhymney has a degree in Computer Science from the University of Michigan-Flint with a minor in Biology. In her free time, Rhymney enjoys spending time with her family, reading, and writing.

**Rachel Carter** joined HRS as a Survey Specialist Associate and will be working as a tester in instrument development. Rachel worked for the past 2.5 years as a Survey Technician in the Survey Services Lab. Through her work in the SSL she gained some wonderful friends and a good deal of data collection experience. She recently graduated from Eastern Michigan University with a Bachelor of Science degree. Her degree has three primary concentrations: Mathematics, Applied Biology, and Social Science. In her spare time she enjoys reading, writing, practicing Taekwondo, and spending time with friends and family.



**Amy Butchart** joined the staff of the HRS in October 2012 as a senior research associate. She is coordinating the collection and coding of pension data to be used in estimates of HRS respondents' pension wealth. Before working at HRS, she was a data analyst and programmer at the CHEAR (Child Health Evaluation and Research) unit in the Medical School, where she analyzed data for the National Poll on Children Health ([mottnpch.org](http://mottnpch.org)) and modeled vaccine development costs. Prior to that, she worked as project coordinator and data analyst at the Ann Arbor Veterans' Association Health Services Research and Development unit. Amy has a Master's degree in Public Health from the University of Michigan. She and her husband have three daughters: one in high school, one in college, and one in graduate school. She and her husband live in Normal Park, Ypsilanti. She enjoys bicycling, kayaking and ice skating at Yost Ice Arena when the season permits. She is known for corrupting the dietary intentions of her HRS colleagues by bringing in home-made goodies on a far-too-regular basis.



Lastly, we would also like to welcome **Laura Mayo Bond**. Laura joined HRS, SRC and ISR in the fall of 2011 as a bio-specimen specialist. She is working with HRS to review and develop its bio-specimen collection and analysis strategies and to assist in the implementation of those strategies. She is also working with colleagues in RCGD on several studies involving biological specimens. Eventually, she will also supervise the new bio-specimen laboratory which is planned for location in the basement level of the new wing. Laura's educational background is in the basic sciences (Chemistry) here at U of M. She has worked in the field of scientific research, primarily in the fields of Adult and Pediatric Hematology/Oncology. She also has a degree in Clinical Research Administration. Laura's outside interests include the arts, as well as classic cinema and mystery fiction. For now, she can be found in 3203 Thompson (one of the offices along the hallway between HRS and PSID).

## SAVE THE DATE

We will be holding a reception to welcome all of our new staff on **Thursday, July 25** from 2:00-3:00 in 3038 Thompson.

Rob Stawski has been a Faculty Research Fellow with the Psychosocial Aging group for the past two years and will be leaving soon to be an Associate Professor in the School of Social and Behavioral Health Sciences, at the Oregon State University College of Public Health and Human Sciences.

Tara Queen has been a post-doc with Jacqui and is leaving in September to begin a post-doctoral researcher position in the department of psychology at the University of Utah. Tara will be working in the developmental health program on projects related to healthcare decision making and management across the lifespan, including cancer treatment decision making and patient well-being. Congratulations to both of you!

## Fun Stuff

Congratulations to Jacqui Smith on receiving the American Psychological Association Division 20 (Adult Development and Aging) 2013 Mentorship Award. The Mentor award is presented to an individual who has consistently provided support, guidance, and strong direction to undergraduate and graduate students in aging and adult development. This award recognizes those who are actively committed to mentoring and who best exemplify the qualities identified with strong, effective mentoring. The award will be presented at the Division 20 Business Meeting during the 2013 APA convention.

Congratulations to Janet Keller who is the 2013 SRC Diversity Award recipient. The SRC Diversity Award honors and recognizes those employees who have demonstrated a significant commitment to enhancing diversity in the workplace. The selection committee noted that “Janet’s contributions to diversity both within SRC and the greater community set her apart. She is a regular and ongoing supporter of ISR Feeds and ISR Reads as well as meeting organizer and subcommittee participant for the ISR Director’s Advisory Committee on Diversity. Janet strongly values awareness of social justice and is involved in groups such as these because she feels they inspire her colleagues to take action.” Jeff Nicholls (CMT) notes in his letter of nomination “As a long time employee of ISR . . . , Janet has demonstrated her commitment to the ISR community and its values long before they were officially articulated as being ‘in the public interest’.”



Janet receiving her award at the SRC all-staff meeting

We gathered on May 2 to bid Gwen Fisher a fond farewell. Gwen's family--Pierre, Alex, and Adam--joined the party. Dani Hochfellner (who is responsible for the German data enclave) had a great time playing with Alex, spying on passersby from the cover of a cubicle. The party also included a wonderful pot-luck lunch and an amazing memory book made by Halimah.



Gwen is now Assistant Professor of Psychology in the Industrial/Organizational Psychology program at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, CO. She will continue her association with ISR as a faculty associate and, of course, with her many ISR and UM collaborators.

Dani and Alex