

Note from Director/Associate Directors

Updates in this issue of the HRSNews attest to fact that the pace at HRS never slows, and the past 6 months have been no exception. The wheels of production never stop turning: data from 2012 have been released, the 2014 field period is well-underway, and we submitted a supplemental grant to fund the screening effort for the new Late Baby Boomer cohort to be added to the HRS in 2016. In addition, the HRS team has continued outreach efforts to expand the numbers of researchers and research consortia using our genetics and biological data, new and updated data linkage efforts are creating expanded opportunities for studying how health care and health in the “Obamacare Era,” and a new project to better measure cognitive decline and dementia in the HRS is also in the pilot phase. It has been a busy 6 months, indeed, and we have an incredible team working tirelessly to get the job done.

As temperatures finally warm, everyone at Michigan Square is looking forward to returning to the Thompson building and to the grand opening of the new ISR wing. While it could change, the current date set for the move is June 9th. It is no small matter to keep things running smoothly through the move, and we are grateful to have such an amazing and experienced administrative staff that makes it all happen.

Speaking of amazing and experienced...all of us will be especially glad to have Mary Beth back at the helm sometime in May. We have missed her in every way.

David and Ken

HRS Program News

New Cohort Proposal

HRS recently completed work on a proposal to NIA to fund data collection for a new cohort, which will include the last of the Baby Boom generation (born 1960-65). HRS data continue to be of high value to researchers and policy analysts across a wide range of disciplines and around the world. Refreshing the sample to maintain its “youthful” pre-retirement edge is critical to the study’s continued value.

The fundamental challenge of the steady-state refreshment design for HRS is the need to identify a probability sample of a narrow six-year birth cohort from the general population every six years. The share of such cohorts varies with the size of birth cohorts, but each qualifies as a rare population, making the cost of locating eligible households a major concern. We have to search a lot of haystacks to find enough needles, even more so to achieve minority oversample targets. This is compounded by the rising difficulty and cost of sample recruitment generally. The primary goal of the sample design for this new cohort recruitment is to produce a late baby boomer (LBB) cohort sample such that the

resulting sample size will be approximately the same as for each of the already enrolled EBB and MBB cohorts in total, and separately for African-American, Hispanic, and White/other while at the same time managing costs.

After pursuing a number of possible strategies to address this challenge, we will be using an innovative design that will make use of commercial data on age, race, and ethnicity of households. Experiments with commercial sources were conducted during our 2010 minority oversample recruitment. Data from those experiments, plus valuable data from the National Survey of Family Growth (NSFG), were analyzed by Rick Valliant, Sunghee Lee, and Frost Hubbard of SMP and SRO's statistical analysis group in collaboration with HRS. These indicators are far from perfect so they cannot be used simply to identify eligible households. They can be used to stratify a sample of addresses to direct work toward groups with higher probabilities of being eligible, which will reduce the cost of screening by nearly thirty percent compared with traditional area-based oversamples for minorities. The downside to this method is the increased variance in sampling weights needed to compensate for the differential sample selection. The design developed by Valliant and Lee takes into account the loss of effective sample size from weight variance in an optimization program.

Of course, HRS is always looking ahead. Our next new cohort, scheduled for 2022, will be the first "Gen X" cohort. We hope to identify a substantial number of Gen Xers during our 2016 screening. We will maintain contact with them over the intervening six years.

Care Preferences Question Added to Core

HRS has always included information about circumstances surrounding the end of life. Increased interest in palliative care has revealed the need to expand data resources for increasing the knowledge base about end-of-life care options and outcomes. Recognizing this need, the NIA and the National Palliative Care Research Center (NPCRC) have collaborated to identify the top priorities for research in the field. To address how the HRS might best serve researchers interested in geriatrics and palliative care research, a meeting funded by the NPCRS was held in Ann Arbor in September 2013. Representatives from the NIA, NPCRC, VA, and HRS participated in the meeting, along with researchers from around the country who have used HRS data for end-of-life research.

The findings from this meeting are summarized in an article entitled, "Leveraging the Health and Retirement Study to Advance Palliative Care Research" published in 2014 in the *Journal of Palliative Medicine*. Follow this link for the full article:

<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=Leveraging+the+Health+and+Retirement+Study+to+Advance+Palliative+Care+Research>

One result from the conference was the addition of the following question to the HRS core survey in the 2014 wave:

"Thinking about your experiences with the health care system over the past year, how often were your preferences for care taken into account?"

The group of palliative care experts felt that this new question will provide unique data on important aspects of end-of-life care. In addition, a number of HRS questions related to the location of hospice care were refined to address the changing nature and location of hospice services in the United States. Given the growing number of older adults, and the likely changes to the organization and financing of

health care related to Obamacare, we think these new additions and refinements to the HRS will be useful for better tracking this important topic.

Data Products by Theresa Norgard

The following summary applies to three areas: HRS Coding, HRS Data Products, and the HRS Pension Project. The HRS coding effort is coordinated by Kelly Kempter; data products by Tom Blackburn and Theresa Norgard, and the HRS Pension project is coordinated by Amy Butchart.

The 2012 coding process for the HRS Core/Exit/Post Exit data is in full swing. We began the process by extracting upwards of 3 million open ends and 120,000 F2 comments. After restructuring and eliminating the questions that are not on our list to be coded, we ended up with 11,333 open ends and 51,550 comments, which include “other (specify)”, amount, per, and select PI requested questions. We hired two temporary coders who quickly completed the open end coding. Presently, we are just over 60% done with coding the comments, which are being coded by temporary coders and members of the data processing team. Each wave, we implement several quality control measures related to coding and the results are looking positive thus far. After the coding itself is complete, we will perform several consistency checks and begin the process of applying the coding changes to the data.

The data processing group recently delivered the preload for the 2014 field period, and is currently producing 2014 production data for review. As a consequence of the review, they are also preparing new and/or altered preload for the 2014 data collection effort. There are also several data projects underway including the 2013 Internet survey, 2012 Exit and Post Exit. In addition, the data for the 2013 Consumption and Activities mail survey (CAMS) are going through the data entry process and batch cleaning. The 2013 Health and Nutrition Mail Survey data are in the preliminary stages of data cleaning. The field period for CAMS and the Health and Nutrition Survey goes through April 2014. The 2013 Veteran’s Mail survey data were released a few weeks ago, as was a new version of the 2010 Core data. The next big push will be to complete the 2012 Core Final data and update the HRS Tracker file.

HRS pension work begins with HRS survey responses concerning employers and jobs, and moves to a data collection of the pension documents that apply to HRS respondents. Since March 2013, the pension team has been hard at work examining employer information, job characteristics, and pension plan eligibility provisions to identify relevant pensions, obtain the pension documents, and match individual plans to specific 2010 HRS respondents. By using web-based methods to do this, we have achieved higher success rates and quicker turn-around than was possible in previous waves. At this point, we have gathered more than 500 defined-benefit plans and more than a thousand defined contribution plans. Our success rate in finding a related plan for a respondent is currently at about 80%. Our efforts now are focusing on writing and testing the unique mathematical formulas that express each plan's pension benefits. We write these formulas to be general enough to account for all the dimensions, such as salary and years of work, that can vary across all the participants in a plan and that are needed to make calculations of pension wealth and characterize the economic incentives to stay in pension-covered jobs. We are excited to be making and using this new process for handling pension acquisition, coding and testing, and have now coded more than 100 defined benefit plans representing HRS respondents from more than 30 U.S. states.

Instrument Development by Kathy Terrazas

The 2014 data collection effort commenced at the end of February and is humming along smoothly. We are now in week 8 of 2014 data collection with about 5,000 completed interviews. We

have had two production data review sessions with both internal and external analysts providing valuable feedback about the quality of data being collected. Initial reports seem to show that the extensive questionnaire “cuts” enacted this wave are bearing fruit in that the interview time is showing noticeable reduction.

Looking to the future, the instrument development team is in full swing in the transition to Blaise 5 and development of the web version of the HRS main instrument. We are working closely with two SRO special teams – the Blaise 5 technical team and the Web Design specialists. Our programmers and key SRO technical staff meet regularly with the Blaise 5 developers at Stats Netherland to debug and enhance this new platform. This effort continues to be very productive, both for HRS and Stats Neth. HRS wins because we are actually converting our complex survey to Blaise 5, running into show stoppers, developing design and structural improvements to current content and generally making sure that Blaise 5 will handle all of our survey development, testing, sample management and para data needs. Stats wins because HRS is doing some of the most comprehensive and complex testing they have had from the user community and the programmer-to-programmer interaction has made their development much more effective. Our work with the SRO Web Survey design team has been extremely beneficial. We are getting really inventive “out-of-the-box” suggestions for how to design some of the more complicated (and currently clunky) sequences in the HRS instrument.

SRO by Nicole Kirgis

In January 2014, Nicole Kirgis and Heidi Guyer transitioned Survey Director positions. Nicole re-joins the project, having run the data collection for HRS 2002 and 2004. In February and March, SRO trained a total of 200 interviewers in both the field and the Survey Services Lab for 2014 data collection. The first 2014 interview was conducted on March 5 and the anticipated number of 2014 interviews is 20,381. Work on the CAMS and HCNS mail surveys wraps up in April.

Dissemination by Amanda Sonnega

Since it was published in the Journal of Human Resources in 1995, Tom Juster and Richard Suzman’s paper “An Overview of the Health and Retirement” has stood as the primary reference for researchers citing information about the background and methodology of the HRS. It remains as an important citation, but an updated citation was needed that reflects the growth and change in the HRS. The Cohort Profile series in the International Journal of Epidemiology was identified as a sensible venue with wide reach. Given the journal’s 3,000 word limit, writing the paper was a bit like canning a Giant Squid—in one can! The article was published online in March, and the print version will likely be available this summer. You can access the on-line version at:

<http://ije.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2014/03/25/ije.dyu067.full?sid=c4fc239f-b24e-4b30-a344-be06322c91fa>

Administration by Cathy Liebowitz

The HRS Administrative Team continues to manage while understaffed by 2.0 FTEs. We are very busy with a variety of projects – including proposals, travel arrangements, meeting support, Summer Institute support, exhibits, compliance, sensitive and restricted data access, HR transactions, plus SPACE!

We want to thank the SRC Director's Office SWAT for providing sustained assistance over the past few months since we've become short-handed. The search is underway to hire a Contract-Grant Specialist to build our strengths in the pre-award arena, with some post-award responsibilities thrown in for fun. Aneesa will return to work, at least part time in a few short weeks, and then full-time in June – just about the time we're going to move... We'll be fully staffed again starting this summer. Facilities management has become a top concern for most everyone, in some way or another. We have a target move date of June 9 to move from Michigan Square back into ISR Thompson. Furniture has been ordered, and now work is underway on finalizing telecommunication/data, security, and other critical areas. We also are working hard to clear out old materials, to reduce and recycle wherever possible. We still hope to implement a large-scale scanning effort of pension plans, and SCF materials from the 80s and 90s. Those filing cabinets and boxes have to go somewhere! We also have plans to digitize some audio materials for possible future research.

And through it all, we will continue to provide a high level of administrative support for meetings, conferences, workshops, travel, procurement, outreach, grants management, compliance, and everything else that needs to be done. With a smile. But, please, feel free to provide chocolate or other treats at any time.

HRS in the News by Amanda Sonnega

A recent study that has gotten a lot of press attention examines the HRS through 2010 to see what effect occupation has on cognitive functioning in retirement. The study, led by Gwen Fisher with Jessica Faul and others, finds that on average participants had long tenure in the career jobs—25 years—and worked on a range of different tasks requiring different levels of mental engagement. Those who worked in jobs doing things like analyzing data, developing objectives and strategies, making decisions, solving problems, evaluating information and thinking creatively had better cognitive functioning and slower cognitive decline in retirement than those whose jobs did not involve those kinds of demands. The differences could not be explained by participants' health, symptoms of depression, economic status and demographic characteristics, including years of education. The findings were published online recently in the *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*.

For a write-up of the study in US News on-line, click on the following link:

<http://health.usnews.com/health-news/articles/2014/04/04/your-mentally-stimulating-job-may-help-keep-you-sharp-in-retirement>

Personnel Changes

After 14 ½ years with HRS, Carol Bowen started a new job in January as the Senior Research Process Manager in the Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation Department within the University of Michigan Medical School. Congratulations Carol!



Fun Stuff

Congratulations to Aneesa Buageila and her husband Matt on welcoming their second child. Zakariyah Vargas Buageila Stehney was born March 7, 2014 (on his due date!) at 3:54am. He weighed 7 pounds 9 ounces and was 20.5 inches. He joins his brother Sufyan, kissing him in the picture below. Can you tell these brothers apart? Zakariyah on the right and Sufyan, at the same age, on the left.



In early April, Edison McGovern (in the red sweatpants below) got some help from his mom, Jessica Faul (with the camera below), to organize and run a neighborhood duathlon. According to Edison's

plan, participants rode their bikes to a park, ran an obstacle course through the park, then back on their bikes to the finish line. Medals, balloons and granola bars greeted the finishers.



No kidding, this was a serious race!