

National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS)

1. Where can I go for more information about this database?

NAMCS http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/ahcd/ahcd_scope.htm%20-%20namcs_scope

2. What is this database?

ambulatory medical care services in the United States; The survey also provides statistics on the demographic characteristics of patients and services provided, including information on diagnostic procedures, patient management, and planned future treatment.

3. How is the data collected?

Findings are based on a sample of visits to non-federal employed office-based physicians who are primarily engaged in direct patient care. Physicians in the specialties of anesthesiology, pathology, and radiology are excluded from the survey. The survey was conducted annually from 1973 to 1981, in 1985, and annually since 1989. Specially trained interviewers visit the physicians prior to their participation in the survey in order to provide them with survey materials and instruct them on how to complete the forms. Data collection from the physician, rather than from the patient, provides an analytic base that expands information on ambulatory care collected through other NCHS surveys. Each physician is randomly assigned to a 1-week reporting period. During this period, data for a systematic random sample of visits are recorded by the physician or office staff on an encounter form provided for that purpose. Data are obtained on patients' symptoms, physicians' diagnoses, and medications ordered or provided.

4. Who are the patients represented in this database?

patients of non-federal employed physicians

5. Who are the respondents to the survey?

Findings are based on a sample of visits to non-federal employed office-based physicians who are primarily engaged in direct patient care.

6. Latest Data Available?

2010

7. Contact information if questions about the data?

Ambulatory & Hospital Care Statistics Branch/ National Center for Health Statistics/ 3311 Toledo Rd., Hyattsville, MD 20782/ 301-458-4600

8. Comments/Notes

Prior to calendar year 2002, NAMCS and NHAMCS public use files did not contain the sample design variables that are needed by sophisticated computer software like SUDAAN, which computes standard errors while taking the complex multi-stage sampling design into account. The design variables are confidential and have never been released to the general public. However, in 2002, a 5-year research project culminated in a plan to mask sample design variables so that they could be released without fear of disclosure of survey participants. The 2000 public use files were released with these variables, and files from 1993-1999 were re-

released to include them. We are currently working to add masked sample design variables to NAMCS files from 1989-1992, and to NHAMCS files. Please see the survey documentation for more information about using computer software like SUDAAN to calculate standard errors. Another method for calculating variances for NAMCS and NHAMCS estimates which does not require using SUDAAN or similar software is to use a generalized variance curve as described in the public-use file documentation. Use of this curve will produce approximate standard errors for estimates of visits and drug mentions. The variances that are produced in this way, using methods explained in the survey documentation, will, in general, be less precise compared with those produced using SUDAAN. Users with additional data needs may contact the NCHS Research Data Center to conduct on-site research with restricted survey files. More information about the Research Data Center is available on the NCHS website. (Source: http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/ahcd/ahcd_faq.htm)