



In 1987 the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) released data from several major surveys, fielded a new questionnaire to collect data on acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) knowledge and attitudes, and completed the planning for the largest-ever health examination survey of the American people.

1987 in Review

Current patterns in health care utilization. NCHS released the data from two important health care surveys in 1987. The 1985 National Nursing Home Survey reported an increase of 22 percent in nursing homes since the last survey in 1977. The survey documents other changes in nursing home operations, such as the significant increase—28 to 41 percent—in chain-operated homes. Five percent of the population ages 65 and older reside in nursing homes. The proportion of elderly in nursing homes did not change from the last survey conducted in 1977. The proportion of nursing home residents discharged to general hospitals showed an increase from 1977 to 1985, with the percentage rising from 41 to 49 percent. In 1985, about 4 of every 10 nursing home residents relied primarily on their own income or family support as the source of payment for nursing home care. Medicaid was the primary source of payment for about 20 percent of the residents whose stays were less than 1 month long, but Medicaid paid the bills for about 56 percent of the residents whose stays were 6 months or longer.

The 1985 National Ambulatory Care Survey data became available during 1987. Findings profile the 636.4 million visits to office-based physicians in 1985. The physician visit rate of 2.7 visits per person remained unchanged from the earlier survey in 1981. In 1985, essential hypertension was the most common diagnosis and a blood pressure check the most frequently ordered or provided service during the office visit.

NCHS AIDS data. The first results from a 15-minute questionnaire on AIDS knowledge and attitudes were released in late 1987. On August 10,

1987, the AIDS questionnaire was added to NCHS' National Health Interview Survey to assess current levels of knowledge about AIDS transmission and risk and to measure change over time. Provisional data covering August 10–30 show that about 20 percent of Americans say they know "a lot" about AIDS. On the other hand, 40 percent report knowing "little or nothing" about AIDS. The vast majority of Americans know that "it is very likely or somewhat likely to get AIDS from having sex" (97 percent), from sharing drug needles (96 percent), or from a pregnant woman passing AIDS to her baby (91 percent).

Misinformation about AIDS is still high. Donating blood, sharing utensils, public toilets, and mosquitoes were viewed as very or somewhat likely modes of transmission by 25 to 45 percent of the respondents. Only 3 percent identified going to school with a child who has AIDS as a very likely risk of getting the disease; another 12 percent thought it somewhat likely. An equal number of men and women—90 percent—rated their chances of getting AIDS as none or low. Data will be produced on a monthly basis and used to target educational and information programs and direct prevention and treatment efforts.

An important aspect of AIDS data collection was the development of a new classification for the HIV infection. Staff at the NCHS and other Centers for Disease Control programs have collaborated to create unique categories for AIDS to be used in morbidity and cause-of-death coding. The new classification was implemented for morbidity in October 1986 and for deaths occurring since January 1987.

NCHS was responsible for issuing the first national data on hospitalization for AIDS with the release of data from its National Hospital Discharge Survey. Examining data for 1984 and 1985, NCHS reported on some 33,000 hospitalizations for AIDS.

Questions on AIDS have been incorporated into the National Survey of Family Growth, which will be fielded in January 1988, and the National Maternal and Infant Health Survey, which will go into the field in the fall of 1988. (For more information about these two surveys, see *Public Health Reports*, November–December 1987 issue.)

NCHS focus on aging. The biennial Public Health Conference on Records and Statistics was held July 13–16. Its theme, "Data for an Aging America," brought together more than 1,000 producers and users of health statistics to a national forum on data to address the health needs of older Americans.

Aging was also the focus of two special NCHS surveys. In household interviews and in a followup longitudinal study, data on the health status; use of health services; community, family, and social support of middle-aged and older people were collected and made available in publications and public use data tapes during 1987.

Survey plans. The third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES III) is the seventh and the largest in a series of national health examination surveys conducted by NCHS. NHANES III will collect data through standardized physical examinations, household interviews, and laboratory tests to assess the health and nutritional status of adults and children in the United States. NHANES III will begin data collection in October 1988 and, over the course of the next 6 years, travel to 132 locations across the country to reach the 60,000 persons selected to participate in the survey.

As in past health examinations, data will be collected on the prevalence of chronic conditions in the population. Four areas have special emphasis in NHANES III: child health, health of older Americans, occupational health, and environmental health. Unlike previous health examination surveys, NHANES III has no upper age limit. To produce reliable statistics for blacks and Hispanics, these groups are oversampled in the survey.

Each year the National Health Interview Survey collects basic data on the health of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population. Each year, special health topics on areas of high priority in public health are also selected. Child health, alcohol consumption, medical device implants, occupational illness, and injury were chosen for 1988.

Finally, planning for a comprehensive survey of health care in the United States will be a top priority for NCHS in 1988.

Trends in Hysterectomies

A new report from NCHS analyzes the trends in hysterectomies over a 20-year period. Hysterectomies are one of the most frequently performed major surgical procedures in the United States, although they have declined slightly since their 1975 peak. During the 20-year period 1965-84, there were approximately 12.6 million hysterectomies performed on women in the United States. The annual number of hysterectomies peaked in 1975 at 725,000, then declined slightly into the 1980s and has remained between 650,000-675,000 procedures each year.

Other highlights of the report show that the average length of hospital stay for hysterectomies decreased considerably, from about 11 days in the 1960s to 9.4 days in 1975 and 7.2 days in 1984. The decline in length of stay is probably attributable to improved surgical techniques, use of antibiotics in high risk patients, and earlier postoperative ambulation.

Cancer was present in slightly more than 10 percent of all hysterectomies. The most common diagnosis was fibroids, which accounted for 27 percent of all hysterectomies. Endometriosis was the only condition to show a marked increase in rate for hysterectomies. The rate of hysterectomies for endometriosis increased 121 percent from the period 1965-68 to the period 1982-84. Endometriosis accounted for approximately 15 percent of hysterectomies in 1984.

The report also examined the patterns of hysterectomies by age. The frequency of hysterectomy rose as women approached the age of 30 and peaked for women in their thirties and forties; from 50 years of age and older, the number dropped markedly. The average age for women having a hysterectomy remained consistent at 42.7 years during the period 1965-84. These statistics on women with hysterectomies are based on data from NCHS' National Hospital Discharge Survey of non-Federal short-stay hospitals. The report also examines trends by number, rate, and average length of stay for age, region, race, diagnosis, and surgical approach. "Hysterectomies in the United States," Vital and Health Statistics Series 13, No. 92, is available from the Government Printing Office, GPO Stock No. 017-022-01026-7; Price \$2.

Family Public Use Data Tape on Health Care Expenditures Available to Users

The National Medical Care Utilization and Expenditure Survey was conducted in 1980 to collect data on the use and cost of health care in the United States. A national sample of 6,800 families in the United States was surveyed in calendar year 1980. Respondents provided data throughout the year in four to five interview sessions. Many publications and data tapes have been issued with the findings from that survey. A special data tape has just been created to facilitate analysis of health expenditure patterns by family unit.

Each family interviewed has one record that includes information on the family as a total social family unit. The tape includes information on health status and health conditions, medical and dental visits, hospitalizations, health insurance coverage, and out-of-pocket and total expenditures for health care.

The public use data tape can be ordered directly from the National Technical Information Service, 5285 Port Royal Road, Springfield, VA 22161. Use order number PB87-172326; the price is \$200.

New Guide to Vital Records

The 1987 edition of "Where to Write for Vital Records, Births, Deaths, Marriages and Divorces" has just been published by the NCHS, and copies are now available from the Government Printing Office. This publication is a guide to obtaining copies of vital records. The report lists address, fees charged, and ordering information for each type of record for each State or registration area. Copies of vital records are often needed to file for health or other benefits, to apply for various programs, and to obtain social or legal services. To order the report, request GPO Stock No. 017-022-10001-1. The price is \$1.50.

New NCHS Publications

Vital and Health Statistics Series 1, No. 22, Plan and Operation of the NHANES I Epidemiologic Follow-up Study, 1982-84; GPO Stock No. 017-022-01005-4; Price \$7

Vital and Health Statistics Series 10, No. 162, Health Care Coverage by

Sociodemographic and Health Characteristics, United States, 1984; GPO Stock No. 017-022-01024-1; Price \$3.75

Vital and Health Statistics Series 10, No. 164, Current Estimates from the National Health Interview Survey, United States, 1986; GPO Stock No. 017-022-01017-8; Price \$9

Vital and Health Statistics Series 11, No. 238, Anthropometric Reference Data and Prevalence of Overweight, United States, 1976-80; GPO Stock No. 017-022-01023-2; Price \$4

Advance Data No. 138—Highlights of Osteopathic Office Practice, National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey, 1985

Advance Data No. 139—Health Care Coverage by Age, Sex, Race, and Family Income: United States, 1986

Advance Data No. 140—Recent Declines in Hospitalization: United States, 1982-86, Data from the National Health Interview Survey and the National Hospital Discharge Survey

Advance Data No. 141—Health Practices and Perceptions of U.S. Adults with Non-Insulin-Dependent Diabetes: Data from the 1985 National Health Interview Survey of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention

Advance Data No. 142—Discharges from Nursing Homes: Preliminary Data from the 1985 National Nursing Home Survey

Advance Data No. 143—The 1986 Inventory of Long-Term Care Places, an Overview of Facilities for the Mentally Retarded

Advance Data No. 145—1986 Summary: National Hospital Discharge Survey

National Medical Care Utilization and Expenditure Survey, Series B, Descriptive Reports No. 15, Total Family Expenditures for Health Care, United States, 1980; GPO Stock No. 017-022-01015-1; Price \$15

Sale publications are available from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, DC, 20402. All other publications are available directly from NCHS. For copies or more information, contact the Scientific and Technical Information Branch, 3700 East-West Highway, Hyattsville, Maryland 20782, or phone (301) 436-8500.

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