PCORnet CDC COVID-19 Electronic Healthcare Data Initiative

News and updates

May 2023

Operational updates

Point32Health cyber incident and query distribution impacts

On April 17, Point32Health, the parent organization of the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute, identified a cybersecurity ransomware incident. In response, multiple systems that we use to support our work were taken offline, including systems that our analysts need to create and distribute queries. Until this response is complete, query distribution will be on hold.

Law enforcement and regulators are working with Point32Health to investigate the incident, and Point32Health IT staff are working around the clock to restore all systems. So far, we are not aware of any data breach. We are hoping that systems will be restored shortly, and we will send out our next query when they are.

If any questions about this, please reach out to Lauren Cleveland (lauren.cleveland@point32health.org) or Jason Block (jblock1@partners.org).

Extension of the COVID-19 CDC project

We have received notice that CDC intends to fund this project for a 4th year, starting August 1, 2024. We are working with The Public Health Informatics Institute (PHII) on budgets, and we anticipate that there will be very slight budget cuts for sites of approximately 2% ($1000 in direct cost reductions per site). We expect the project to continue from August 2023 to July 2024 in a fairly similar manner to the current contract year. PHII anticipates a confirmation pf funding from CDC by July 2023.

As usual, please let us know if there are questions or concerns. Lauren Cleveland at the Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Institute is the main point of contact –lauren.cleveland@point32health.org.

Bi-monthly webinar

The project management team will host its next bi-monthly informational webinar on **Monday, May 22, 2023, at 11:00 a.m. ET.** The session will provide a platform for sharing key project updates and answering site questions. Please register for the webinar prior to attending, and a calendar invitation will automatically be sent.

Technical updates

Query update

Harvard Pilgrim has completed several queries in the last several months, including:

- Assessment of stroke incidence after bivalent mRNA COVID-19 vaccines (compared to incidence after influenza vaccines or respiratory illnesses, including influenza and COVID-19).
- An updated mortality-focused query that explored risk factors for death and hospitalization after COVID-19 infections: this query also pulled patient-level data to facilitate further analyses on this topic. This patient-level data will be made available to CDC investigators/analysts through a server managed by the Louisiana Public Health Institute, the lead site for REACHnet.
- Use of preventive care services during the COVID-19 pandemic period, such as mammography and colonoscopy screenings which ran on the full CDM.
- Incidence of cardiac complications after COVID-19 and mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in adults.

Upcoming queries

Our current plans are to complete the following queries over the next few months:

- **By mid-May:** a query assessing annual incidence of varied chronic diseases before and during the pandemic. This query will run on the Full CDM.
- **Late May–July:**
  - Another **cumulative query** that will examine trends in COVID-19 infections and COVID-19 medications across the pandemic.
  - A query that will assess **control of hypertension and diabetes across the pandemic.**
  - Query on **long-term healthcare utilization of patients with varied diagnoses consistent with post-acute sequelae of SARS-CoV-2.**

Query run times

Sites have been experiencing issues with longer run times, particularly with the queries distributed in April 2023. We have developed a new query package that we hope will reduce these run times, and we are working with programmers to explore further efficiency updates. We have also extended the deadline for queries to 10 business days, unless the query is identified as high priority for the CDC.

Additional Updates

Manuscripts and dissemination

The PCORnet team continues to work on several manuscripts that are making their way through the publication pipeline:

In Process
- A descriptive paper on trends in demographics of pediatric patients infected with SARS-CoV-2 was rejected by two journals, in part because it was out of date with data. We are updating this publication with new data through November 2022, and expect to submit it again soon. A similar paper on adult patients was submitted in January 2023 to *PLoS Medicine.*
- A distributed regression paper on the association of symptoms and conditions with COVID-19 infection will soon be submitted to *Lancet Regional Health-Americas.* It was originally rejected by *PLoS Medicine*.
- A distributed regression paper on control of diabetes and hypertension and severe COVID-19 outcomes is under review for publication at the *Journal of the American Health Association* after originally being submitted to *Circulation*.
- A manuscript on trends in the severity of COVID-19 across the pandemic is drafted and being reviewed by the writing group.
- A manuscript on incidence of stroke after COVID-19 is currently being prepared by CDC investigators.

The CDC COVID Data Tracker is regularly updated with data from PCORnet sites. This data was updated with data through November 2022, based on data recently acquired from sites in mid-January. Data visualizations can be viewed here. We are working on a query that will update this data in May or June.

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