A Brief History of the National Health Interview Survey and Plans for Its Future

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Early health surveys in the U.S.

- Focused on control of infectious disease, mortality
- Not a source of continuous health data on health, morbidity
- Revealed the need for quantifiable data on disease prevalence, disability, health behaviors, and health care utilization
- 1935-36 National Health Survey
National Health Interview Survey (NHIS)

- Created by 1956 National Health Survey Act, Public Law 652; signed by President Eisenhower

- Went into the field first time: July 1957

- Represents noninstitutionalized civilian U.S. population

- Fielded continuously (noted exceptions)
How has the NHIS changed over time?
Changes in survey content/structure

Then...

• Detailed medical care use

• Family unit health characteristics

...Now

• Health status, health-related behaviors, general access to and utilization of health care

• Each family member + sample child + sample adult
Changes in sample/survey design

Then...

• Estimates only for total national population

• Ask about individual body systems

...Now

• Estimates for subpopulation groups to assess health disparities through oversampling

• More holistic approach – mental health, functioning, quality of life
Changes in data collection procedures

Then...
• Paper and pencil questionnaire
• Collect race/ethnicity by observation, then only for adults

...Now
• Computer Assisted Personal Interview (CAPI)
• Collect detailed respondent-reported race and ethnicity, including multiple race
Changes to selected questionnaire items

Then...

• Income questions with high non-response

• Missing data on SSN, critical for linkage to other data

...Now

• Testing of new methodology led to lower non-response on income

• Collect last 4 digits of SSN
Other survey changes

Then...
- Relative stability in sample sizes in early years; gradual decline
- Only more recent years of data available online

...Now
- After sample cuts 2002-2008 (except 2005), recent increases for state-based estimates
- Release of public use microdata files back to 1962-63
What’s next for the NHIS?
## Selected 2012 NHIS Supplements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
<th>Approx # of minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Complementary &amp; Alternative Medicine (Adult &amp; Child)</td>
<td>NIH/NCCAM</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internet &amp; Email Usage*</td>
<td>ASPE</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Security *</td>
<td>USDA</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enhanced Health Care Access and Utilization - ACA*</td>
<td>HHS</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* Also to be fielded in 2013
## Selected 2013 NHIS Supplements

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<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Sponsor</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hepatitis C</td>
<td>NCHHSTP/CDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Epilepsy</td>
<td>NCCDPHP/CDC</td>
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<td>Arthritis</td>
<td>NCCDPHP/CDC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asthma (adult and child)</td>
<td>NCEH/CDC, NIAID &amp; NHLBI/NIH</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABCs of Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention*</td>
<td>NCHS/CDC</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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More future plans for the NHIS

• Web-based query system for use with in-house and public use data

• Sample redesign in 2016

• Field testing of A-CASI technology for possible use in survey

• Exploration of collecting limited biomarker data
For more information:

NHIS Website:

http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm

- Survey content
- Data releases
- Data from Early Release program
- Much more!