

Making Blaise Work Like Paper for the N(H)AMCS Surveys

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Abstract

The National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) sponsors the National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NHAMCS) and the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey (NAMCS) which collect information about the health problems of ambulatory patients and the treatment given to them. The NHAMCS collects this data from hospital emergency rooms and outpatient departments while the NAMCS collects the data from office-based physicians.

The U.S. Census Bureau had been administering both surveys using numerous paper forms. In June 2010 the NCHS began discussions with the Census Bureau about automating the data collection process for both surveys. By February 2011 the Census Bureau's authors had begun developing five instruments for the NAMCS and the NHAMCS.

Both the NAMCS and the NHAMCS have two phases of data collection. The first phase of data collection involves an "induction" interview that collects information about a physician's practice in the NAMCS and the services offered by either a freestanding ambulatory surgery center or the various departments of a hospital in the NHAMCS. The second phase of data collection is the "abstraction" interview which collects patient information in the Patient Record Form (PRF) section of the abstraction instruments.

The two surveys collect similar data and have similar functionality. This paper will discuss three key features that the NAMCS/NHAMCS instruments have in common. These are:

- The instruments' use of dialog boxes to simplify data collection in different areas of the instruments.
- The customization of Blaise Mode Library layout to mimic the paper PRFs.
- The requirements for navigation within and between the PRF forms and having the forms look and feel the same across the two surveys