



The STS National Database™ News

The Society of
Thoracic Surgeons

Volume 2, Issue 2
August 5, 2003

Join us for The Society of Thoracic Surgeons November 2003 Data Managers' Meeting

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) will hold its first stand-alone Data Managers' Meeting November 20-22, 2003, at the Marriott Chicago Downtown. The STS family of databases now includes the Congenital and General Thoracic Databases in addition to the Adult Cardiac Database, which expands greatly the interests of all involved in the STS National Database Outcomes Program.

The November meeting will feature a full-day session specifically for Congenital Database Data Managers. This session, scheduled for Thursday, November 20, will be held prior to the Adult Cardiac and General Thoracic Database sessions, and will allow Congenital Database users to have a full day to focus on the issues specific to Congenital Heart Surgery data and outcomes.

The Adult Cardiac program is scheduled for Friday November 21 and Saturday morning, November 22. Program highlights include a session on the upgrade to Version 2.5x software, presentation of the new national report and risk models by the Duke Clinical Research Institute (DCRI),

workshops on developing research questions and posters, and the opportunity to meet with representatives from your software vendor throughout the day.

After a successful inaugural session at the January 2003 Data Managers' Meeting in San Diego, the Chicago meeting will also include a poster session during the Adult Cardiac program. Submitted posters will focus on how use of the STS National Database has resulted in significant improvement in cardiothoracic practice and outcomes at the local and regional levels. If you are interested in presenting a poster, please submit the form in the Database section of the STS Web page <http://www.sts.org> (Database/Data Managers' Abstract Submission).

A General Thoracic Surgery Database (GTSDDB) Meeting will be held immediately following the Adult Cardiac program in the afternoon on Saturday, November 22. This meeting will focus on the harvest process, an overview of the upcoming GTSDDB report, and discussion of a possible specification upgrade for 2004.



Advance Registration is required to attend this highly informative program. The registration form is available in the Database section of the STS Web page <http://www.sts.org> (Database/Data Managers' Section/November 2003 Data Managers' Meeting). For further information or questions, please contact Lauracyn Montgomery at (312) 202-5833 or lmontgomery@sts.org.

Each Data Manager brings his or her own unique experiences and interests to the program for our annual Data Managers' Meeting, making for a richly informative session. We look forward to the participation of Data Managers from all of our participating sites. See you in Chicago!

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Did you know:

You too can contribute to the STS National Database News!

If you have ideas for future articles and are interested in writing, please contact Barbara Garren by e-mail at bgarren@sts.org.



What do you know... about the STS National Database?

Have you ever wondered exactly how many participants there are in the STS National Database or what defines a participant? Below you will find answers to these and other questions.

How many participants are in the STS National Database Outcomes Program?

- The Adult Cardiac Database has 494 participants*.
- The Congenital Heart Surgery Database has 13 participants*.
- The General Thoracic Surgery Database has 29 participants*.

How do you define a current participant?

A participant in the STS National Database is a party that has an executed participation agreement on file

at the STS Headquarters office.

How many commercial vendors are certified to sell STS adult cardiac software? 14

How many participants submitted data for the Adult Cardiac Database Spring 2003 Harvest? 432

How many participants submitted data for the Congenital Database Fall 2002 Harvest? 16

How much does it cost to participate in the STS National Database?

For the Adult Cardiac Database, the 2003 participation fee is \$2,100 if an individual cardiothoracic surgeon or a majority of the cardiothoracic surgeons in a group are

members of the STS; otherwise, the participation fee is \$2,400.

For the Congenital Heart Surgery Database, the 2003 participation fee is paid in two installments -- an annual fee of \$2,000, plus a "volume-based" fee of \$1 per patient record submitted as part of any data harvest.

For the General Thoracic Surgery Database, the 2003 license and participation fee is calculated based on whether the participant is an STS member or the participating site comprises a majority of STS members. If a majority of participating surgeons are STS members, the license and participation fee is as follows:

- \$1,000 if there is only one surgeon participant;
- \$1,250 if there are two surgeon participants; and

- \$1,500 if there are three or more surgeon participants.

If the participant is not an STS member or the participating site comprises a majority of surgeons who are not STS members, then the license and participation fee is as follows:

- \$1,250 if there is only one surgeon participant;
- \$1,500 if there are two surgeon participants; and
- \$1,750 if there are three or more surgeon participants.

*Please Note: The number of participants in the STS National Database changes daily. The numbers listed above are accurate as of 7/29/03.



Data Quality Tip: Accessing the STS Web Site for Adult Cardiac Database Harvest Information

Please visit the STS Web site for the [STS Harvest Instructions and Information](#). All the documents to assist in the harvest process can be found on the STS Web site: www.sts.org.

Instructions for accessing the following major document categories

Go to www.sts.org

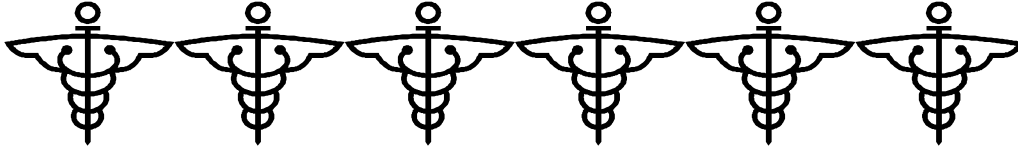
Select: "Database."

From the drop-down menu, select "Adult Cardiac Surgery."

Scroll down to select documents from the following categories:

Harvest Instructions & Information	CDS Assignment Map	Data Quality Consistency Edits
Data Collection Form	CDS Contact Information	Parent/Child Relationships
Vendor Software Information	Reports/Requests	Analysis-Risk Model Fields
STS Contact Information	Procedure Identification Table	STS Risk Algorithm FAQ's

Please contact your DCRI Clinical Data Specialist if you are not able to download the necessary documents.



The Society of Thoracic Surgeons National Database Managers' **HIPAA UPDATE**

A few months ago, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) forwarded its Standard Form Business Associate Contract and Data Use Agreement (Standard Form Agreement) to the Primary Data and File Contacts at all STS National Database Participating Sites. Sent with that document were instructions for completing the Standard Form Agreement. We recently noted a typo in those directions - specifically, an incorrect zip code. The correct zip code is 60611. Please send both signed copies of the Standard Form Agreement to:

The Society of Thoracic Surgeons
Attn: Lauracyn Montgomery
633 North Saint Clair Street
Suite 2320
Chicago, IL **60611**

Once the Executive Director of the STS has signed both copies of the Standard Form Agreement, a copy will be mailed to the Primary Data and File Contact at the institution, while a second copy will remain on file at the STS. The turn-around time for the STS to return your signed Standard Form Agreement is approximately two weeks from the day it arrives at the STS.

When corresponding with the STS about HIPAA-related topics, please include the name of the institution and the participation number of each site that is being referenced. With so many Database participants, this information helps expedite the response process.

The Standard Form Agreement and related documents can be viewed on the STS Web site.

Go to: www.sts.org.

From the left-hand navigation bar, select "Database."

From the drop down menu, select "HIPAA."

The STS appreciates all the time and effort put forth by Data Managers from all three Databases in obtaining signatures for the Standard Form Agreement. If you have not received your Standard Form Agreement, or if you have questions pertaining to completion and signing of the Agreement, please feel free to contact Lauracyn Montgomery at (312) 202-5833 or lmontgomery@sts.org.

Thank you again. We look forward to receiving your signed Agreement as soon as possible and to your continued participation in the STS National Database.



Emphasizing Data Quality and Completeness

Improving the quality of data in The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) National Database continues to be a top priority for the STS Workforce on National Databases and the Duke Clinical Research Institute (DCRI).

As participants in the STS National Database, you receive immediate feedback on your data submission during harvests and are given the opportunity for multiple data revisions and resubmissions, an effort to ensure that data being submitted are of the highest quality. Each time you submit data, you receive a data quality report. In the next week, any sites with remaining data quality issues will receive a letter highlighting specific areas that require further data quality review based on data sub-

mitted in the recent harvest.

The letter will specifically concentrate on the following site data problems from the most recent harvest:

- A 40% variation in procedure volume among any of the 4 most recent years;
- The submission of at least 10 duplicate records within a specific participant (patient A for participant 11111 is mistakenly entered into the software system twice) or between two participants (patient B is included by both participant 22222 and 33333 as both handle cases for the hospital in which patient B was treated);
- Extreme high or low values for any of 34 key database fields (see the table on the fourth page

of Appendix A on data quality in the spring 2003 report for the threshold high/low values); and significantly lower than expected operative mortality.

When such issues have been raised in the past, many sites have performed a thorough review of their data and have found clinically valid explanations for them. Please remember that the primary objective of this review program is to allow for early detection of problems and a reduction in future errors.

From all across the country, there has been tremendous participant response to the challenge of providing sound and valid data. Most notably, levels of incomplete data have decreased significantly. For instance, mean levels of missing risk factor data went down

from 5% in 1998 to less than 1% in 2002. The future integrity, credibility, and usefulness of the STS National Database depend on the quality and completeness of data submitted. It is crucial that data quality control measures continue to be implemented and that data continue to be monitored. Not only will these efforts make the database a stronger quality improvement tool, but they will render it credible in presentations and negotiations with Congress, the Department of Health and Human Services, third party carriers, the Leapfrog Group, and other large purchasers of healthcare.

Your efforts toward data quality and completeness are greatly appreciated.

STS Data Managers' Poster Session Abstract Reminder!

Abstracts may now be submitted for consideration for the November 2003 Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) Data Managers' Meeting. The meeting, to be held in Chicago, November 20 – 22, will also include a formal poster presentation session. The theme of the meeting's presentations will be Quality Improvement Activities Utilizing the STS National Database. The deadline for abstract submission is August 15, 2003. Abstracts received after that date cannot be considered for inclusion in this year's program unless prior authorization is obtained. Electronically submitted abstracts will be the only method of submission. To submit your abstract for consideration:

Go to www.sts.org.

Select "Database."

From the drop down menu, select "Data Managers Section."

Scroll down to "Data Managers' Abstract Submission" and click.

Select "Data Managers' Electronic Abstract Submission Form" and click.

Once you have opened the Electronic Submission Form,

1. complete the submission form,
2. save the completed submission form to your computer, and
3. e-mail the completed submission form, as an attachment, to bgarren@sts.org.

Decisions regarding abstract acceptance will be communicated in late September.



Adult Cardiac Database Moves from Version 2.41 to Version 2.5x

It is hard to believe it is that time again – specification upgrade time for the Adult Cardiac Database. Although the process will not be fully completed until July of 2004, much time and effort has gone into making this a positive specification upgrade and as smooth a transition as possible.

For the past year, The Society of Thoracic Surgeons (STS) has been collecting specification upgrade suggestions. Suggestions have been received from individual Data Managers, regional groups, physicians and vendors. Specific groups that have sent us their suggestions include the American College of Cardiology, the Northern New England Consortium, the California CABG Outcomes Reporting Program (CCORP), and the Massachusetts Data Analysis Center (Mass – DAC). Suggestions have ranged from how to better define a field to which fields to delete. The STS has also been able to identify potential areas for improvement through patterns in clinical questions received from Data Managers. Fields that consistently need clarification are being evaluated and re-defined.

On May 12-13, 2003, members of the Task Force on Definitions and Data Specifications met in Chicago to begin the daunting task of upgrading version 2.41. The

Task Force comprises physicians, Data Managers, representatives from Duke Clinical Research Institute (DCRI), and vendors. In the weeks prior to the meeting, the STS and DCRI worked together to compile all upgrade suggestions and incorporate these suggestions into a main document that would guide the Task Force through the upgrade process. Much progress was made during this meeting. The work on upgrade 2.41 now continues via weekly Task Force conference calls.

New to this specification upgrade is the STS requiring each vendor to submit their software to a predetermined third party for certification. Much was learned during the last upgrade and the STS will apply those lessons learned to this upgrade. Also, the STS has received good insights from Data Managers about features needed to effectively manage their data. The STS is planning to incorporate many of the features suggested by Data Managers into the 2.5x upgrade. Here are just two of those suggestions:

- Add the ability to pull up records created under older versions of the data specifications and edit them following the older specification rules;
- Maintain all data in one database to allow the

sites to query their data across time periods, regardless of what data version was being used.

The STS is excited to move to version 2.5x as a way to improve the specifications themselves and to improve the vendor features that are available to Data Managers. We thank all the Data Managers for their suggestions.

Version 2.5x Timeline

August 1, 2003:

Specification upgrades delivered to Participant-Generated Software (PGS) sites, vendors, and physicians.

August 15, 2003:

Feedback due back from PGS sites, vendors and physicians.

September 1, 2003:

All 2.5x specification information sent to DCRI.

October 1, 2003: Version 2.5x specifications released to PGS sites and vendors.

December 1, 2003:

Vendor certification to begin.

January 1, 2004:

Sites may begin to collect 2.5x data on paper. If the vendor is certified, sites can use software to collect 2.5x data.

May 1, 2004:

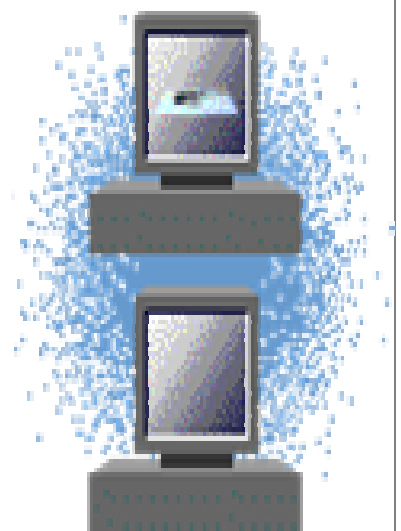
Vendor certification completed.

June 1, 2004:

Vendor installation complete for all sites.

July 1, 2004:

Mandatory start of 2.5x data collection.



Cardiac Surgery Quality Initiative in Michigan: A Joint Effort of Data Managers and Physicians

The Michigan Society of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons is just beginning its 40th year. For many years, the Michigan Society has held summer meetings for discussion of cases and presentations by invited speakers. These meetings create a collegial atmosphere for cardiac and thoracic surgeons to come together once a year to discuss clinical, scientific, and pertinent state issues. In the mid- to late 1990s, with the evolution of the national quality movement in cardiac surgery and a realistic sense by the state Society that thoracic surgeons in Michigan should be leaders in the quality endeavor, the Michigan Society began working with Duke Clinical Research Institute (DCRI) to formulate a blinded regional report. Review of this regional data report at state meetings moved the Michigan Society full force into the quality movement and facilitated an atmosphere wherein the highest quality outcomes are achieved.

It was recognized quite early that the site Data Managers were key to reaching this goal. In January 2000, a meeting was held with Michigan Society leadership and interested Data Managers throughout the state to create a framework for a valid database. This led to the first combined summer meeting of surgeons and Data Managers.

Held in August 2000, this inaugural joint meeting focused on discussing regional data and troubleshooting clinical and administrative issues.

The momentum for the state database effort was engineered with a belief that Michigan's efforts would be only as good as the collected data.

The Michigan Society was simultaneously recreating its bylaws to move formally into the arena of quality initiatives and assurance as a peer review organization, and beginning efforts to bring all cardiac surgery programs in Michigan into the process. As a part of this effort, a core group of experienced Data Managers met with Michigan Society leadership to begin regular joint meetings. The momentum for the state database effort was engineered with a belief that Michigan's efforts would be only as good as the collected data.

Voluntary site visits and chart audits by Data Managers were initiated in October 2001. As the Data Manager initiative grew, so did the benefits of networking. The initiative provided a forum for discussion of definition issues across state sites and offered a platform for the State of Michigan to present questions and ideas to the STS National Database. Database Managers and Michigan Society leadership continued the combined outcomes meetings, and in October of 2002, twenty-six Data Managers representing 22 of the 31 cardiac surgical sites in Michigan, met in this voluntary program. The Data Managers selected five targeted outcome indicators to study across sites. During this time, the Data Managers worked closely with the STS and created a model to test the validity of site and cumulative state data through the creation of two artificial CAB data sets for prediction of risk. Two imaginary patients, "Paige Test" and "Rhonda Risk," facilitated a study of processes and revealed human error in data entry as well as software challenges. This process study allowed discrepant risk scores from various sites for these two imaginary patients to be corrected and a 100 percent risk score match across all sites to be achieved.

create a statewide culture of process-sharing for optimization of efficiencies at all sites and further analysis of risk prediction for valve patients. The state physician leadership continues to champion the Michigan Society of Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgeons as an appropriate vehicle for quality initiatives. Further, the Michigan Data Managers have created an open network of e-mail and Web site communication in support of the quality initiative. Data Manager leadership is committed to the shared goal of quality improvement with the support and vision of our Michigan state society. The Michigan Data Managers hope to have 25 of the Michigan cardiac surgical programs represented in discussions of regional data at this summer's meeting.



Cardiac surgeons and Data Managers are continuing to



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Topic Suggestions for the November 2003 Data Managers' Meeting!

In preparation for the Society of Thoracic Surgeons November Data Managers' Meeting in Chicago, we have reviewed the evaluations from the 2003 Data Managers' Meeting in San Diego and decided to heed your suggestion that Data Managers be polled prior to each meeting for topic suggestions. So, here is a chance for your ideas to be heard! To submit your topic suggestions for the November meeting:

Go to www.sts.org.

Select "Database."

From the drop-down menu, select "Data Managers' Section."

Scroll down to "November 2003 STS Data Managers' Meeting in Chicago" and click.

Select "November 2003 STS Data Managers' Meeting Topic Suggestion Form" and click.

Once you have opened the "November 2003 STS Data Managers' Meeting Topic Suggestion Form,"

1. complete the suggestion form,
2. save the completed form to your computer, and
3. e-mail the completed form, as an attachment, to bgarren@sts.org.

Calling all STS Data Manager Regional Groups!

The STS is interested in learning more about your regional group. To disseminate information about the good and interesting work that regional groups are doing across the country, the STS is developing a section of www.sts.org where regional groups can post information about their group's activities. The objective is to provide a forum for communication between the STS, the regional groups, and all Data Managers. If you are the primary contact for your regional group, please download and complete the "Regional Information Form" from the STS Web site.

Go to www.sts.org.

Select "Database."

From the drop down menu, select "Data Managers Section."

Scroll down to "Regional Information Form" and click.

Once you have opened the "Regional Information Form,"

1. complete the form,
2. save the completed form to your computer, and
3. e-mail the completed form, as an attachment, to bgarren@sts.org.

The STS National Database™ Newsletter is published periodically throughout the year for participants in the STS National Databases. Comments concerning content may be referred to STS Headquarters, 633 N. Saint Clair St., Suite 2320, Chicago, IL 60611-3658; Phone: 312.202.5800; Fax: 312.202.5801;

E-mail: sts@sts.org, Web: www.sts.org

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The STS National Database™ Newsletter.

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ADVANCE REGISTRATION FORM

Deadline: Wednesday, October 22, 2003

**The Society of Thoracic Surgeons Presents
The November 2003 STS Data Managers' Meeting
November 20-22, 2003**

Meeting Location:

**The Chicago Marriott Downtown
540 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611
Phone: 312-836-0100
Fax: 312-836-6139**

Meeting Registration Information:

**PLEASE MAIL OR FAX TO STS AT
P.O. Box 809308
Chicago, IL 60680-9308
FAX: 312-202-5803**

For Housing Reservations Call:

800/228-9290 or 312/836-0100 (local)

I. Registrant Information: (Please print)

First Name	Last Name	Degree
Company Name	Mailing Address	Suite No./Floor/Dept
City	State/Province	Zip/Postal Code
E-mail address	Telephone Number	Fax Number

II. Type of Registration:

- Adult Cardiac Workshop \$ 250.00 (4020-403-305)
 Congenital Workshop \$ 100.00 (4020-403-311)
 General Thoracic Workshop \$ 50.00 (4020-403-314)

Total: \$ _____

Please check here if you cannot attend the meeting but wish to receive the meeting materials via mail. List Name of Workshop(s) _____
(There is a \$50.00 charge per workshop. List payment information below)

III. Total Fees: Please make checks payable to The Society of Thoracic Surgeons

Amount Enclosed: (U.S. Dollars) Check Visa MasterCard American Express \$ _____

Credit Card #: _____ Expiration Date: _____ / _____ / _____
Mo. Dy. Yr.

Card Holder Name: _____

Signature: _____

All requests for cancellations must be submitted in writing to The Society of Thoracic Surgeons and postmarked by Wednesday, October 22, 2003. Requests for refunds will not be honored after that date. Please note: A processing fee of \$50.00 will be charged for all cancellations.

Hotel Information:

A special room rate has been arranged at the Chicago Marriott Downtown for the STS Data Managers' Meeting participants. Reservations can be made by calling 800/228-9290 or 312/836-0100 (local). Confirmed rates for this meeting are \$169 per night for single/double occupancy plus state and local taxes (currently 14.9%). There is a \$20 charge for each additional person. These rates are guaranteed through October 22, 2003. Please reference The Society of Thoracic Surgeons Data Managers' Meeting when making your reservation. **Participants are encouraged to register early, as space is limited.**