

After consultation with our survey contractors, Abt SRBI, we concur with the reviewers that we can modify our methods for an improved response rate using the full 3-step modified TDM. By reducing the total survey sample to 5000 (formerly 8000 proposed), we will be able to send advance (pre-alert) letters to the whole sample, then surveys with cover letters to the whole sample, then one followup to nonresponders with a replacement survey enclosed. It is estimated that with this 3-step approach we may obtain a response rate of 55-60%, well worth the reduction in total sample size. We have also learned that recently there has not been the anticipated concern about coded ID numbers on such surveys, so this process should work with our assurances of anonymity of survey responses.

Changes made in compliance with OMB suggestions include:

- 1) Race question has been rephrased per standard (see attached survey PDF)
- 2) Protocol has been revised to include improved 3-step modified TDM (Dillman)—changes underlined
- 3) Protocol has been updated to include mandated OEF/OIF standard per VA guidance (except title due to IRB listing as is)
- 4) All text describing “confidentiality” of responses has been changed to “anonymous” or “anonymity”, as appropriate in protocol and all study letters.
- 5) The 3<sup>rd</sup> letter for nonresponders has been changed to reflect improved methodology (i.e. replacement survey enclosed)
- 6) The survey cover page now contains the mandated OMB verbiage in smaller font and the references to the privacy act have been deleted