OBJECTIVES: This project will compare the outcomes of care for the VA and Medicare's managed care plans (Medicare Health Outcomes Survey) on the basis of physical and mental health. This is based upon the Health Outcomes Survey (HOS) and the Veterans Health Study (VHS) using the MOS SF-36 and the Veterans SF-36 health status assessment. Objectives are: (1) to compare the SF-36 physical and mental health outcomes of the HOS and VHS; (2) psychometric testing to establish comparability of the outcome measures in the HOS with the outcome measures in the VHS; (3) perform validation study of the survey responses using administrative and clinical data. Research Design: Observational longitudinal cohort comparisons of the HOS and VHS. Methodology: The design of the HOS questionnaire follows the Medical Outcome Trust SF-36 (also known as the MOS SF-36). The Veterans SF-36 was modified from the MOS version with increased precision to the role physical and emotional scales and physical and mental summary scores for use in veteran populations. Validated conversion formulas for the Veterans SF-36 allow comparison with the MOS version. Three HOS cohorts (one initiated in spring 1998; the others in 1999 and 2000) have been identified; each is followed every two years (revisited in 2000, 2001, and 2002 respectively). For each, CMS drew random samples of 1000 Medicare beneficiaries (regular Medicare and SSI) from each Medicare Contract (contract number (market) basis). In smaller contracts with less than 1000 beneficiaries the HOS has sampled the entire group. A total of 879,202 beneficiaries returned questionnaires for the three cohorts. The VHS involved national probability samples of veterans in the VA representing 31,823 in 1998, 887,775 in the 1999 large survey and a cohort of 22,116 from 1998 to 1999.. A Dillman approach is used for surveying the beneficiaries and veterans that include two mailed surveys for both and telephone follow-up for the HOS only. Response rates in all surveys exceeded 63%. Analysis will be restricted to males 65 years of age and over. Findings: Psychometric findings of the MOS SF-36 and Veterans SF-36 versions suggests that the degree of measurement equivalence of the two SF-36 types can be computed and compared for Medicare and VA systems. The Veterans SF-36 is comparable to the MOS SF-36 for 6 of the 8 scales, but distinctly different in role physical and role emotional scales and the two component summaries. Because of this difference, the Veterans SF-36 demonstrates improved reliability and validity for the role scales and summaries.

Impact/Significance: The gains in precision for the veterans' version are important and provide evidence for the use of this version in future applications for assessing outcomes across health care systems.