Getting the Information You Need from CDW: SQL Starter Language

by Margaret Gonsoulin, PhD



Thanks to:

- Richard Pham, BISL/CDW
- Colleagues at VIReC



Agenda for Today

- This is follow-up to:
 - First Time Research User's Guide to CDW
 - Seeing the Data When You Can't See the Data
- Review key terms and definitions
- Orient new SQL users to CDW's data organization
- Provide new CDW users with a few basic SQL programming skills



Reminder - 2 Domain Types

- Production Domains contains tables that have been structured by database architects to support their re-joining.
- Raw Domains contains tables that are direct extracts from the source system (e.g., VistA) that are simply being housed with no editing performed on them.
- These types of domains also vary in terms of their naming traditions.



CDW, VINCI & SQL

- CDW –Corporate Data Warehouse a relational database that contains significant portions of the VA's electronic health record.
- VINCI VA Informatics and Computing Infrastructure – (in part) a remote server that provides software and holds a copy of CDW.
- SQL Structured Query Language a programming language used to retrieve information from a relational database.



SSMS -SQL Server Management Studio

- SSMS is computer software that can be used to write and execute SQL code.
 - This talk assumes that you have access to CDW data and SSMS.
 - The examples included in this talk use oversimplified material from the CDW in order to illustrate the logic of SQL.
 - Therefore, this talk is not intended to demonstrate a viable research investigation.



By the end of this talk,

We hope that a new CDW user will:

- Have a basic understanding of SQL
- Be able to read a basic SQL query
- Be able to write a basic SQL query
 - For tables in the production domains
 - For tables in the raw domains



Poll #1: Your CDW Experience

Rate your level of experience with CDW data on a scale of 1 to 5...

Not worked with it at all
 Not worked with it at all
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In the Production Domains

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The Production table called Dim.ICD9



SQL Server Management Studio





| 🍢 Microsoft SQL Server Management Studio | | | | | | | | | |
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| | CDW_Validation | | | | | | | | |

Expand "Databases"

Then, scroll down to find "CDWWork"

Note: this example uses a view of a dimension table in the database folder called CDWWork; all people with basic access to CDW will be able to see this view.

New Query





1st Right click the view name for this drop-down menu and then click "select top 1000 rows"

2nd The query seen in the right top screen is automatically written

3rd The results below it automatically appear.

SELECT and FROM

- SELECT allows a programmer to list the columns (variables) that they would like to see in the results of their query
 - Each column name should be followed by a comma except the last one in the list
- FROM selects that appropriate *view* from which the columns will be collected
 - The name of the view should be written in this format "database.schema.view"



SELECT & FROM







ORDER BY

- The ORDER BY command allows the programmer to see the results in alpha-numeric order based on the column that is chosen.
- ORBER BY must be the last command in a query.

SELECT column1, column2, column3 FROM Database.Schema.View **ORDER BY column1**;



ORDER BY



SELECT ICD9Code, ICD9Description, MDC

Notice that the same ICD codes repeat in the data because the 130 VistA systems have each sent their own list.

The repetition can be eliminated with a new command.

GROUP BY

- The GROUP BY command collapses identical values into a single entry rather than allowing repetitive rows to exist in the output.
- Remembering that ORDER BY must be the last command in a query, GROUP BY should precede it.
- Every column that is not an aggregated* measure must be included in the GROUP BY clause.

SELECT column1, column2, column3 FROM Database.Schema.Table **GROUP BY column1, column2 , column3** ORDER BY column1 ;





SELECT ICD9Code, ICD9Description, MDC **GROUP BY ICD9Code, ICD9Description, MDC**

| Now there are 16,645 rows. |
|------------------------------|
| We can see the ICD code of |
| 971.0 only has a single row. |

We can ask to see how many times each value repeats.

COUNT function

- The COUNT function can be added to the SELECT phrase in the query to create a new column.
- Because the new column is a sum (an aggregate measure), the programmer is obligated to include the GROUP BY clause in the query for all non-aggregate columns.
- The AS allows for the new column to be given a name by the programmer.

SELECT column1, column2, column3, **COUNT (column1) AS Freq** FROM Database.Schema.View GROUP BY column1, column2, column3 ORDER BY column1;



COUNT



WHERE statements

- The command WHERE allows a user to limit their search to include only a chosen subset of the data.
- Let's select the ICD9 code (309.81), indicating posttraumatic stress disorder.
- Although 309.81 looks like a number, you will need to know whether ICD9Code is a character or a numeric entry in CDW before you can write a WHERE statement.





VARCHAR = a string of variable length

(50) = the maximum number of characters

Other examples seen here:

Char = string of fixed length

Int = integer

Smallint = integer

Date = a date

LIKE vs. =

- LIKE is typically used for string variables
- = is typically used for numeric variables
- So, because ICD9Code is a string, we will use LIKE in the WHERE phrase
- Always use single quotes around your characters
- Numeric values would not require quotes

SELECT column1, column2, column3
FROM Database.Schema.View
WHERE column1 LIKE '-----' ; --note the value will go in the quotes





Poll #2: About You

Which of the following best describes your role in the VA?

Research Investigator / PI

Data Manager / Analyst

- Project Coordinator
- Operations
- **Other**



In the Raw Domains

We will repeat the process with Dim.ICD9_Diagnosis_80

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SQL Server Management Studio





The only difference from the previous example is that I am now working off of a different server that holds the raw domains.

Expand Databases and Scroll to CDWWork



New Query



Press "new query" to open this window, and type your SQL query here.

Use the list of *views* in CDWWork to help guide your effort.

We will use Dim.icd9_diagnosis_80

Notice the difference in the naming styles; views in the raw domains have names that are closely related to the VistA's files from which they originate.

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Again,

1st Right click the view name for this drop-down menu and click "select top 1000 rows"

2nd, the query in the circle is automatically written

3rd the results automatically appear in the bottom window

SELECT and FROM

- SELECT your columns (a.k.a, variables)
 SELECT column1, column2, column3
- FROM your *view* of choice
 From database.schema.view_name
- Don't forget to end with a semi-colon



SELECT & FROM





ORDER BY

• The ORDER BY command will allow us to request the results in order by our chosen column(s).

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• Remember that ORDER BY must be the last command in any query.

SELECT column1, column2, column3 FROM Database.Schema.View ORDER BY column1 ;



ORDER BY



GROUP BY

• Again, we will collapse the repeated entries using the GROUP BY command.

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- Remember:
 - ORDER BY must be the last command
 - Every column that is not an aggregate measure must be included in the GROUP BY clause

SELECT column1, column2, column3 FROM Database.Schema.View GROUP BY column1, column2 , column3 ORDER BY column1 ;



GROUP BY



COUNT function

- Again, we can use the COUNT function to create a frequency table.
- Using AS we can assign the name "freq" to the count column.
- Remember to use the GROUP BY clause for all nonaggregate columns.

SELECT column1, column2, column3, COUNT (column1) AS Freq FROM Database.Schema.View GROUP BY column1, column2, column3 ORDER BY column1;



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WHERE statements

- We'll use the WHERE again to choose a subset of the data.
- We'll select the Code_Number (309.81) for PTSD again.
- Again, we'll check to see whether Code_Number is a character or a numeric before writing our WHERE statement.





VARCHAR = a string of variable length

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(8000) = the maximum number of characters

Therefore, we will tend use the LIKE function rather than an equal sign in our WHERE clause.

Pulling it all together in one query

- SELECT, COUNT, AS, WHERE, LIKE, GROUP BY and ORDER BY
- Remember the rules!

SELECT column1, column2, column3, COUNT (columnX) AS NewName FROM Database.Schema.View WHERE column1 LIKE '-----' --note the value will go in the quotes GROUP BY column1, column2... -- include all non-aggregate columns ORDER BY column1... -- name column(s) to order by -- don't forget to end with a ;







Summary/Conclusion

- These basic commands (SELECT, FROM, WHERE, GROUP BY and ORDER BY) form the core of most SQL queries.
- Using this basic structure, you should be able to explore the content of any view in CDW.
- The goal of the next cyberseminar will be to show you how to combine columns from multiple views; in other words, it will step the new user through a JOIN in SQL.



Contact Information

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Margaret Gonsoulin, PhD VIReC@va.gov 708-202-2413



