**Additional file 1. Data dictionary for variables included in analysis.**

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| Unique identifierAgeSexRaceVISN identifier (index hospital)Date and time of visit (day of week and time of day)Date and time of ED dispositionFacility identifier (index hospital)Facility identifier (receiving hospital)Disposition (local inpatient, local observation, ED-to-ED transfer, ED-to-inpatient transfer, ED-to-non-VHA transfer, discharge, died)Hospital Length-of-StayPatient rurality categoryDiagnosesClinical Classification Software (primary diagnosis)ProceduresSurgical Procedures (Surgery Flag Software)Death within 30 daysTotal miles for transferNumber of beds in index EDED staffed by at least 50% board-certified emergency physiciansED accepts 911 responseOff-hours teleradiology (for CT interpretation)Off-hours radiology resident coverage (for CT interpretation)Outpatient follow-up within 45 days at index hospitalOutpatient follow-up within 45 days at referral hospital |

*Abbreviations: VISN, Veteran Integrated Service Network; ED, emergency department; VHA, Veteran’s Health Administration; CT, computed tomography*