Briefing Note for the Editorial Advisory Group, Member Forum, Content Managers Advisory Group, and Clinical Leads

Updated 1st August 2023

Inactivation of Concepts Specified Male/Female in Descriptions

Subtypes of 67770001 |Male mammary gland structure (body structure)| and 91532001 |Female mammary gland structure (body structure)| and their associated disorder and specimen concepts

Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to inform the Editorial Advisory Group, Member Forum, Content Manager Advisory Group (CMAG) and Clinical Leads Group of a proposed change to the body structure hierarchy and impact on related concepts.

Body structure concepts that specify male or female in descriptions and that are not unique to a specific sex (e.g. male/female breast) are to be considered for inactivation. The concepts modeled by these structures are also to be inactivated. It is proposed that the work for this update begins with the anatomy content for subtypes of 76752008|Breast structure (body structure)|.

Background

Sex specific concepts for anatomical structures that are unique to a particular sex have been fully covered in SNOMED CT anatomy, e.g. uterus, prostate etc. Despite the fact that some body parts, such as the breast and pelvis, have different anatomical features and functions, they are not specific to a particular sex in anatomy. For example, the female breast has lobules. In contrast, men's breast tissue has ducts, but only a few if any lobules. The female pelvis is wider and lower, and the male pelvis is narrower, higher, and more compact. Some of these concepts were added and specified "male" or "female" in descriptions, e.g. female breast. This proposal relates to concepts that specify male/female in descriptions.

Issues

There are three key issues with these specified male and female concepts.

1. Incomplete subconcepts of body structures specified by "male" and "female" result in incorrect classifications because non-sex specific anatomical structures are not included. For example, "neoplasm of areola of female breast" would require a new "female areola" concept to be properly defined. This would result in a suboptimal approach to developing new female/male concepts, despite the fact that they are not sex specific.
2. Discrepancies between queries by specified male and female concepts would have resulted in the loss of results recorded by non-sex specific concepts. For example, rather than 124 female neoplastic disorders, a total of 288 neoplastic disorders could have been used for recording neoplasms of the female breast.
3. There is inconsistency of terminology content in sex-neutral concepts and specified male and female concepts. For example, there are discrepancies in hierarchical relationships and descriptions between breast, male breast, and female breast concepts. The “mammary gland” is a subconcept of “breast”. However, the concept “male mammary gland” has a synonym of “male breast”.

In order to rectify the content issues outlined above, new anatomy concepts would be required to make the existing content consistent. However, the addition of these new concepts does not address all issues, nor does it align with the plan for future content development in the body structure hierarchy.

There are 164 concepts currently modeled using breast structures that specify sex. These concepts will be inactivated with the historical association target of a non sex specific concept. The information about the patient's sex should be recorded separately.

A list of these concepts can be found by ECL: * : * = << (91532001 |Female mammary gland structure (body structure)| OR 67770001 |Male mammary gland structure (body structure)|) and is also available here

Next Steps

The proposed approach is to present the differences in anatomical features without duplicating the same anatomical structures that are shared between males and females. The plan is to review and inactivate concepts specified as male/female in the description and replace them by non sex specific concepts. For example,

Inactivate reason: ‘Non conformance to editorial policy’

91532001 |Female mammary gland structure (body structure)|
Replaced by:
279009002 |Glandular structure of breast (body structure)|

126927001|Neoplasm of female breast (disorder)|
Replaced by:
126926005|Neoplasm of breast (disorder)|

All of the concepts related to male/female breast are neoplasm diseases except one concept for specimen. 126927001|Neoplasm of female breast (disorder)| currently has 123 descendant concepts and 126937006|Neoplasm of male breast (disorder)| has 33 descendant concepts. It is not clear how frequently these concepts are used in established implementations.

Input on this proposal is sought from the Community of Practice. Feedback about the potential impact on implementations for this area of content is required.

It is recommended that Editorial Advisory Group, Member Forum, Content Managers Advisory Group, and Clinical Leads representatives give advance warning to users who may be affected by the updates in this area.

Request: Comments on the proposal to be submitted to Maria Braithwaite (mbr@snomed.org) or info@snomed.org by 26 August 2023.

Approvals	Date	Name
Chief Terminologist	Jul 24, 2023	Jim Case
Director of Content and Mapping	Jul 19, 2023	Monica Harry

Maria Braithwaite, Yongsheng Gao, 26 July 2023 updated 1 August 2023