



SNOMED CT in a 'mixed terminology economy'

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Audience

Implementers and commissioners of healthcare systems currently based on older coding and classification systems, and into which SNOMED CT is being added.

Objectives

To present some of the issues and opportunities that arise when SNOMED CT is introduced into healthcare systems with established information flows that use existing terminologies and classifications.

Abstract

Many modern healthcare systems already have elaborate national and local informatics systems built on earlier schemes for clinical classification (e.g. ICD, OPCS, CPT) and terminology (e.g. ICPC, READ). Clinical query specifications often have to be manually maintained and concurrently published in parallel for more than one scheme, so that the 'same' data can be extracted but from disparate feeder systems. Individual patient records may require 'transcoding' before they can pass between systems that use different clinical terminologies.

In this already complex context, extending support for data flows coded using SNOMED CT may be perceived as only making an existing Tower of Babel higher.

Drawing on experience in the UK, the presentation will describe how SNOMED CT can reduce rather than increase the existing complexity: using a system of clinically assured crossmaps between the legacy schemes and SNOMED CT, query specifications can be authored once (in terms of SNOMED CT) and then translated largely automatically into multiple target schemes. The same crossmaps enable EPR data to be transcoded as it travels around the wider, integrated healthcare system.

The presentation will outline the UK's professionally endorsed methodology for clinical assurance of its crossmaps and for transcoding EPR instance data using them. An advanced query management environment will be demonstrated: the same crossmaps allow query specifications authored in terms of SNOMED CT to be automatically translated into other terminologies and classifications.

References

1. UKTC Data Migration and Analytics Workbench www.uktcregistration.nss.cfh.nhs.uk