5.4.3.2 Modify Description in an Extension

Purpose

The main reasons for modifying a description in an extension are:

- The description term contains an error that needs fixing
- The case significance of the term needs to be changed
- The acceptability of the description has changed - e.g. from acceptable to preferred, or from preferred to acceptable.

Principles

Overview

Making changes to existing descriptions requires careful consideration, because the descriptions may have been used in clinical records to represent the meaning of the associated concept. Changes are, however, permitted, as long as only mutable attributes are modified. Immutable attribute values should not be modified.

The *conceptId* field, the *languageCode* field and the *typeId* field cannot change between different versions of the same description. If a change is required to one of these immutable attributes, then the existing description should be inactivated, and a new description with the required attribute values should will be added.

Extension producers should not modify descriptions, which are part of the International Edition. When issues with international descriptions arise, SNOMED International should be notified so the issue may be addressed in a subsequent release.

Changing Mutable Description Attributes

Table 5.4.3.2-1 lists the various description attributes and their mutability. The following modifications to the mutable attributes are permitted

- Changing the *active* attribute to 0 (i.e. inactive). For more information, please refer to Inactivating a Description in an Extension.
- Changing the term of the description. Please note that only limited changes may be made to the term field, as defined by editorial rules.
  - The International SNOMED CT Editorial Guide states when making a minor change to an FSN, a new description must be created and the old description must be inactivated.
  - Permitted changes include modifications that do not alter the meaning, for example a spelling correction. For a list of permitted changes, please refer to the appropriate section of the Editorial Guide:
    - FSNs - refer to Fully Specified Name
  - When in doubt, an extension producer should inactivate the description and add a new description with the required term.

Table 5.4.3.2-1: Mutability of description attributes

Field	Data type	Purpose	Mutable	Part of Primary Key
id	SCTID	Uniquely identifies the description.	NO	YES (Full /Snapshot)
effectiveTime	Time	Specifies the inclusive date at which the component version's state became the then current valid state of the component **Note**: In distribution files the effectiveTime should follow the short ISO date format (*YYYYMMDD*) and should not include the hours, minutes, seconds or timezone indicator.	YES	YES (Full) Optional (Snapshot)
active	Boolean	Specifies whether the state of the description was active or inactive from the nominal release date specified by the effectiveTime .	YES	NO
moduleId	SCTID	Identifies the description version's module. Set to a child of 900000000000443000	Module| within the metadata hierarchy.	YES	NO
conceptId	SCTID	Identifies the concept to which this description applies. Set to the identifier of a concept in the 138875005	SNOMED CT Concept| hierarchy within the Concept. Note that a specific version of a description is not directly bound to a specific version of the concept to which it applies. Which version of a description applies to a concept depends on its effectiveTime and the point in time at which it is accessed.	NO	NO
languageCode	String	Specifies the language of the description text using the two character ISO-639-1 code. Note that this specifies a language level only, not a dialect or country code.	NO	NO

typeId	SCTID	Identifies whether the description is fully specified name a synonym or other description type. This field is set to a child of 900000000000446008 | Description type| in the Metadata hierarchy.	NO	NO
term	String	The description version's text value, represented in UTF-8 encoding.	YES	NO
caseSignificanceId	SCTID	Identifies the concept enumeration value that represents the case significance of this description version. For example, the term may be completely case sensitive, case insensitive or initial letter case insensitive. This field will be set to a child of 900000000000447004 | Case significance| within the metadata hierarchy.	YES	NO

Changing the Acceptability of Descriptions

An extension producer may also need to change the acceptability of a description. For example, a synonym may change from being acceptable to preferred, or from being preferred to acceptable. This type of change does not require any modifications to the Description file. Instead, the associated member of the relevant language reference set must be modified. For more information, please refer to 5.4.6.2 Modify Members of a Reference Set.

Process

The table below provides a summary of the process to follow when modifying descriptions in an extension.

File Type	Process
Description	A new row which represents a new version of the description is created.
	The attributes of the new version of the description are set as follows: • *id* is set to the descriptionId of the description being modified • *effectiveTime* is set to the date the extension will be published • *active* is set to 1 to indicate that the new version of thedescription will be active at the time of publication • *moduleId* is set to the conceptId of a module that is managed by the extension producer • *conceptId* is set the same as the original version of the description • *languageCode* is set the same as the original version of the description • *typeId* is set the same as the original version of the description • *term* is set to the (possibly updated) string of characters used to describe the given concept. Note: Only limited changes, in accordance with editorial rules, can be made • *caseSignificanceId* is set to indicate the (possibly updated) case significance of the term
Language Reference Set	If no changes to the acceptability of the description are required, then no changes to the associated language reference set members are necessary. If changes to the acceptability of the description are required, a new version of the relevant language reference set member is added with the required *acceptabilityId*.