



Research and Innovation Committee April 2008 Report to the General Assembly

Research and Innovation is one of four IHTSDO Standing Committees. The Committee has scheduled monthly teleconferences, and since the October 2007 face-to-face meetings in Copenhagen, has met four times.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Key accomplishments of the Committee and the Working Groups, Project Groups, and Special Interest Groups that report to it, since the October 2007 meetings include:

- *The Machine Readable Concept Model Project Group (MRCM-PG)* has made good progress since in the last six months. Monthly phone calls have been attended by 8-12 people and the project leader has undertaken specific tasks with IHTSDO support. A paper identifying requirements to support and validate content modeling, concept model documentation and implementation of post-coordination was followed by discussion of alternative approaches. A recommended initial form for representing constraints was specified and a prototype database and application was developed to validate this approach (available for review at the spring 2008 meeting). The work of the MRCM-PG demonstrates a strong potential for enabling and validating logically consistent development and use of SNOMED CT. Realisation of this potential requires further work over the next six month including: refining the prototype, testing against released SNOMED CT content, revising the specification, and integrating human readable guidance. With continuation of roughly the current level of supported work the MRCM-PG is on track to complete as scheduled in the work plan and should start demonstrate practical benefits before the autumn meeting.
- *Enhanced Release Format, Interchange Format and RefSet Project Group* was formed at the Copenhagen meeting last October. Since then members have participated in three tele-meetings. There have been two comment rounds, requesting feedback and advice on the content of these three specifications. Feedback indicated that it would be helpful and desirable for the Jan 08 release data to be made available in ERF form, so that participants could and assess the utility of proposed history mechanisms between SNOMED CT versions by comparison with the Technology Preview previously provided based on Jul 07 release data. Such comparisons would also enable contributors to assess the extent or degree of changes to their existing procedures or tooling in order to accept and use SNOMED CT in ERF form. The provision of further current test materials is currently being arranged through MB and CAP STS. Some contributors have undertaken a more substantial review of these specifications, and have provided alternative proposals. These will be explored and discussed during the Evanston meeting. Most of the work to date had focused on ERF and RefSet proposals. It is expected that when the PG has reached consensus about these two specifications (describing and specifying 'what' the data structures of core SNOMED CT content and RefSet content will be), attention will be directed to the Interchange Format (considering 'how' such content can be exchanged between distributed development sites, members, and their stakeholders).



The majority of PG members have indicated that these specifications may not be finalized for (perhaps) another one or two regular release cycles of SNOMED CT. Parallel releases in both current and proposed formats may be necessary, before existing specifications can be deprecated or abandoned. Substantial benefit is likely to accrue to users of the ERF and RefSet proposals. Considerable concern and effort has been taken to ensure that users of the current release formats can continue to derive this format from ERF (ie: backward compatibility has been a prominent concern, and has been achieved). Further consideration to recommend or decide when the ‘switch over’ from current specifications and methods to these new approaches should occur, is also on the PG agenda for the next 6 months or so.

AREAS OF FOCUS

At the April 2008 meetings and in the following 6 months, the Committee and the Working Groups, Project Groups, and Special Interest Groups that report to it will be focusing on:

- Continue Machine Readable Concept Model and Enhanced Release Format projects and provide recommendation on the implementation phase.
- Future plan for standards development, suggesting priorities for inclusion in the 2009 Work plan.

RELATED GROUPS

The following Project Groups report to the R&I Committee:

- a. Concept Model SIG
- b. Machine Readable Concept Model PG
- c. Enhanced Release Format, Interchange Format and RefSet Project Group
- d. Collaborative Workspace Project (direct report is to Technical Committee)
- e. Pharmacy “is a” Overload – Substance hierarchy (direct report is to Content Committee)