



## **IHTSDO Launches New Global Effort to Build Essential Health Terminology Toolset**

### ***Tools to Benefit 9 Member Nations and Other SNOMED CT Users***

**Copenhagen, Denmark: July 17, 2008** – The International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO) announced today a global effort to improve access to tools needed to develop, maintain, and enable the use of SNOMED CT in health systems around the world. This effort is part of an Open Health Tools Charter Project jointly sponsored by IHTSDO, the National Health Service in the UK and Australia's National e-Health Transition Authority.

"Having accurate and reliable health information when and where needed saves lives and saves time," says Jennifer Zelmer, IHTSDO's chief executive officer. "By working with partners from around the world, IHTSDO hopes to increase access to standards-based solutions that enable the safe exchange of health information in a privacy-sensitive manner."

#### ***IHTSDO Sources SNOMED CT Workbench***

IHTSDO announced today that it is seeking proposals for the supply and maintenance of a SNOMED CT multi-lingual modular workbench that will host terminology editing, translation, mapping, and other applications. Open Health Tools (OHT) is managing this process on behalf of IHTSDO. Open source solutions will be encouraged, but any offerings will be assessed on their own merits.

The SNOMED CT workbench is part of IHTSDO's on-going efforts to enable broader access to, and use of, standardized clinical terminologies worldwide. Already, nine countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Lithuania, Sweden, New Zealand, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and the United States) have joined together to support the on-going development and maintenance of SNOMED CT and related standards, sharing the costs on a sliding scale based on national income and making the standards freely available in their jurisdictions. IHTSDO also offers free access to SNOMED CT in countries that are not yet members for qualifying research projects and on humanitarian or charitable grounds.

#### ***IHTSDO Provides SNOMED CT Free to Participating Software Developers***

IHTSDO also announced that software developers who are building open source tools using SNOMED CT through an OHT Charter Project can now access the terminology at no cost. All software created by OHT will be freely available to anyone, anywhere, under a commercially friendly open source license (the Eclipse Public License). Health service organizations and software companies will be able to use the OHT technology to build products and systems that will interoperate with other OHT-based products to facilitate information exchange.

"The challenge for a standards development organization such as the IHTSDO is to encourage widespread adoption of its standards within the health sector. Open Health Tools provides an opportunity to engage with the software development community to accelerate this uptake by developing open source tools and component libraries which meet their needs and those of IHTSDO Members," stated Karen Gibson, deputy chair of IHTSDO and chair of the IHTSDO Technical Committee.



Making it easier to develop robust and interoperable health information systems is a shared goal for all of the partners in this project. “We envision a worldwide health information interoperability platform and tools that will allow patients and their care providers to have access to vital, reliable, and secure medical information as required. We anticipate that this will help contain the growth in healthcare costs and will save lives and improve the quality and safety of care provided to citizens across the globe,” explained Skip McGaughey, executive director of Open Health Tools.

### **About International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO)**

The IHTSDO (International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation) and its Members seek to improve the health of humankind by fostering the development and use of suitable standardized clinical terminologies, notably SNOMED CT, in order to support the safe, accurate, and effective exchange of health information. The IHTSDO is an international organisation, established as a Danish not-for-profit association. Copies of the recently issued Request for Information/Request for Proposals can be accessed at <https://ihtsdo.projects.openhealthtools.org>.

### **About SNOMED CT**

SNOMED Clinical Terms™ (SNOMED CT™) is a standardized terminology that can be used as the foundation for electronic health records and other applications. For example, different clinicians often use different terms to describe the same concept. SNOMED CT contains more than 310,000 unique concepts and more than 1.3 million links or relationships between them that ensure that this information is captured consistently, accurately, and reliably across the health system. The terminology is used in more than forty countries around the world. SNOMED CT was originally created by the College of American Pathologists by combining SNOMED RT and a computer-based nomenclature and classification known as Clinical Terms Version 3, formerly known as Read Codes Version 3, which was created on behalf of the UK Department of Health and is Crown copyright.

### **About Open Health Tools**

Open Health Tools (OHT) is an open source community with a vision of enabling a ubiquitous ecosystem where members of the Health and IT professions can collaborate to build interoperable systems that enable patients and their professional healthcare providers to have access to vital and reliable medical information at the time and place it is needed. IHTSDO is a founding members of OHT.

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