



Regenstrief Institute

Advancing healthcare through research, development, and education



IUPAC

International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry

Joint Press Release

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Owners of LOINC, NPU, and SNOMED CT Begin Trial of Cooperative Terminology Development

On April 1, 2009, the owners of three standards that contain laboratory test terminology – the *Logical Observation Identifiers, Names, Codes* (LOINC), *Nomenclature, Properties and Units* (NPU), and the *Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine - Clinical Terms* (SNOMED CT) – began an operational Trial of prospective divisions of labor in the generation of laboratory test terminology content. This Trial will provide practical experience and important information on opportunities to decrease duplication of effort in the development of laboratory test terminology and to ensure that SNOMED CT works effectively in combination with either LOINC or NPU.

During the Trial:

- New laboratory test terminology content will be created by the Regenstrief Institute (RI) and the LOINC Committee, which own LOINC, OR by the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry (IFCC) and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC), which own NPU, but not by the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO), which owns SNOMED CT;
- SNOMED CT modeling of such content will be done as a by-product of creating new content for LOINC or NPU and then incorporated into SNOMED CT; and
- SNOMED CT codes will be used to represent appropriate parts of LOINC and NPU entities.

Designed to last 6 months or less, the Trial will also provide an opportunity to assess the robustness of the new SNOMED CT Observables Model as a structure for representing LOINC and NPU laboratory test terminology content; to gain a clearer picture of the differences between LOINC and NPU as background for future discussions about the feasibility of a more unified effort between them to further reduce duplication of effort; and to identify any country-specific aspects of laboratory test terminology that may not be suitable for inclusion in the International Release of SNOMED CT. During this period, users can continue to submit requests for laboratory test terminology to any of the three organizations involved in the Trial.

Martin Severs, Chair of the IHTSDO Management Board, stated “The IHTSDO is extremely pleased to have reached the point of an operational trial of cooperative terminology development with the Regenstrief Institute and IFCC-IUPAC. Some of IHTSDO’s Member countries use both LOINC and SNOMED CT, some use both NPU and SNOMED CT, and others expect SNOMED CT to include the level of laboratory test terminology required to meet their needs. Patients and health care providers need these standards to work together. We are therefore committed to minimizing patient risk and supporting effective communication, decision support, and health data analysis by ensuring that SNOMED CT can work effectively in combination with either LOINC or NPU in computer systems that support electronic patient records.”

Daniel Vreeman, Research Scientist at the Regenstrief Institute and Assistant Research Professor at the Indiana University School of Medicine said “We are delighted to have an opportunity to “just do it” for a trial period, so that a long term agreement between LOINC and SNOMED CT can be informed by a real understanding of the specific technical and policy issues involved in cooperative development of standard terminology. It is an added bonus that the Trial may also help to identify opportunities to reduce duplication of effort in LOINC and NPU development.”

Speaking on behalf of both IFCC and IUPAC, Graham Beastall, IFCC President said “The current economic environment gives us an even stronger motivation to minimize international duplication of effort in standards development and to facilitate international exchange and interpretation of laboratory examination data. This trial is an opportunity to take a concrete step toward those goals.”

Additional Information

The full text of the Memorandum of Understanding between the IHTSDO, RI, and IFCC/IUPAC is available from http://www.nlm.nih.gov/research/umls/Snomed/loinc_npu_mou.pdf

About the Regenstrief Institute (RI) and the LOINC Committee

Regenstrief Institute, Inc., an internationally recognized informatics and healthcare research organization, is dedicated to the improvement of health through research that enhances the quality and cost-effectiveness of healthcare. Established in 1969 by philanthropist Sam Regenstrief on the campus of the Indiana University School of Medicine in Indianapolis, the Institute is supported by the Regenstrief Foundation and closely affiliated with the IU School of Medicine and the Health and Hospital Corporation of Marion County, Indiana. LOINC is a set of universal codes and names to identify laboratory and other clinical observations that facilitates exchange and pooling of clinical results for clinical care, outcomes management, and research. LOINC® was initiated by Regenstrief Institute research scientists who continue to develop it with the collaboration of the LOINC Committee. More information about the Regenstrief Institute is available at www.regenstrief.org and about LOINC at loinc.org.

About NPU (Nomenclature, Properties, and Units), the International Federation of Clinical Chemistry and Laboratory Medicine (IFCC), and the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry (IUPAC)

The NPU terminology (<http://dior.imt.liu.se/cnpu/>) contains 15 000 strictly defined, named and coded properties in the field of Clinical Laboratory Sciences. The joint IFCC Committee-IUPAC Subcommittee on Nomenclature, Properties and Units (C-SC-NPU), will act in this Trial on behalf of IFCC-IUPAC. The general aims of the C-SC-NPU are to provide recommendations on NPU, for reporting examination data that conform to or adapt current standards of authoritative organizations, for improving the understanding and comparability of health care data.

IFCC is an organization of 82 national and 37 corporate members serving laboratory professionals worldwide. Through leadership, collaboration and innovation in science and education IFCC enhances the scientific and clinical quality and understanding of laboratory medicine so improving clinical outcomes for patients. This is achieved by providing a forum for standardization of laboratory methods and by expanding scientific, educational and managerial services within laboratory medicine through publications, scientific meetings, and specialized conferences. More information about IFCC is available at www.ifcc.org.

IUPAC was formed in 1919 by chemists from industry and academia. For almost nine decades, the Union has succeeded in fostering worldwide communications in the chemical sciences and in uniting academic, industrial and public sector chemistry in a common language. IUPAC is recognized as the world authority on chemical nomenclature, terminology, standardized methods for measurement, atomic weights and many other critically evaluated data. In more recent years, IUPAC has been pro-active in establishing a wide range of conferences and projects designed to promote and stimulate modern developments in chemistry, and also to assist in aspects of chemical education and the public understanding of chemistry. More information about IUPAC and its activities is available at www.iupac.org.

About the 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 Clinical Terms™ (SNOMED CT™), in order to support the safe, accurate, and effective exchange of health information. SNOMED CT is a standardized terminology that can be used as the foundation for electronic health records and other applications. It 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. More information about IHTSDO is available at www.ihtsdo.org.

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