

What is SNOMED CT®?

SNOMED CT is considered to be the most comprehensive, multilingual clinical healthcare terminology in the world. It provides for consistent information interchange and is fundamental for an interoperable electronic health record. The UK and a large number of other nations have formed the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO) to maintain and develop SNOMED CT.

Each year, avoidable deaths and injuries occur because of the challenges of effective communication between healthcare practitioners.

Improvement to patient care through systems that accurately record healthcare encounters in a way that can be reliably communicated and exchanged across different systems requires a common terminology; SNOMED CT has been chosen as that terminology.

SNOMED CT sits alongside the coding systems already in use within healthcare; such as the classifications OPCS-4 and ICD10 which are used to categorise disorders and treatments.

Classification data is used to support business planning, epidemiology and the identification of cohorts of patients for clinical audit. SNOMED CT is used to record the clinical details of individuals in electronic patient records and supports informed decision making and long term patient care.

Further Information

The Technology Office provides leadership and guidance on standards, security and business and technical architecture to suppliers, programmes and the NHS as a whole.

The UK Terminology Centre sits within Data Standards and Products which is part of the Technology Office.

For more information about the various training materials available please visit <http://www.connectingforhealth.nhs.uk/snomed> or for information about SNOMED CT workshops, seminars and tailored presentations please contact the UK Training Lead for SNOMED CT by emailing snomedtraining@nhs.net.

SNOMED CT®

What is it?

What are the benefits?

Who will it affect?



SNOMED CT®

The chosen terminology for the NHS in England.

How much do you know?

This leaflet provides an overview of SNOMED CT.

SNOMED CT is an acronym for Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine Clinical Terms. It is a clinical terminology that has been developed to support the effective clinical recording of data, with the aim of improving patient care. It covers areas such as diseases, symptoms, operations, treatments, devices and drugs.

This terminology is being incorporated into electronic healthcare applications and while it is not essential for everyone in the NHS to understand SNOMED CT in depth, it is important to have a background to SNOMED CT, the potential benefits and how it may change the way we record clinical data.

Benefits of SNOMED CT®

In essence, the recording of clinical data through SNOMED CT will enable consistent retrieval, transmission and analysis of data from patient records across healthcare systems. Currently this is not achievable with current data recording. Some benefits that can be achieved through SNOMED CT include:

- It captures clinical information at the level of detail needed for the provision of healthcare.
- Through sharing data it can dramatically reduce the need to repeat health history at each new encounter with a healthcare professional.
- Information can be recorded by different people in different locations and combined into simple information views within the patient record.
- The use of a common terminology decreases the potential for differing interpretation of information.
- Electronic recording in a common way reduces errors and can help to ensure completeness in recording all relevant data.
- Standardised information makes analysis easier, supporting quality, cost effective practice, research and future clinical guideline development.
- A clinical terminology allows a healthcare professional to identify patients based on specific coded information, and manage screening, treatment and follow ups more effectively.

Who will it effect?

The detail of who SNOMED CT will affect is dependent on role and the applications being used. It is expected that everyone involved in the recording, retrieval or analysis of patient information will come across SNOMED CT in some form.

It is anticipated that end users of applications such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, allied health professionals and clinical administrative staff will need a basic level of knowledge.

Power users such as clinical coders, information analysts, health record managers, information managers and managers of clinical databases will require a more in depth knowledge of SNOMED CT, its structures and the theory behind SNOMED CT.

To facilitate the introduction of SNOMED CT, a range of options for individuals to learn more about SNOMED CT have been developed. For more information see overleaf.