



Research and Innovation Committee October 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 April 2008 face-to-face meetings in Evanston, has met six times.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Key accomplishments of the Committee and the Working Groups, Project Groups, and Special Interest Groups that report to it, since the April 2008 meetings include:

- *The Machine Readable Concept Model Project Group (MRCM-PG)* remains confident that fully realising SNOMED CT's value proposition as a modern terminology is critically dependent on its work. Monthly phone calls have been attended by 5-9 people, with a contractor continuing to undertake specific tasks and the bulk of the work with IHTSDO support. Concerns have been voiced by the group to its parent R&I Committee regarding the level of participation in its program of work. While the project deliverables are believed to be of the highest technical quality, they would have benefitted from input from other identified experts. These were often unable to participate because of other commitments, often scheduling conflict with other IHTSDO meetings. Despite these concerns, the project group remains on schedule to submit its 5 deliverables at or shortly after the Autumn 2008 conference, and believes it will have substantially met the immediate objectives of its project plan by end-November. A full day session at the Autumn conference will be used partly to disseminate the PG results, partly to identify and discuss outstanding issues, and partly to discuss future plans. Likely recommended next steps include disbanding the group under R&I and reinstating it under Content and/or Technical with a view to both beta-testing the prototype application and associated specifications, and identifying the people and processes by which an authoritative IHTSDO MRCM artefact might be created, authorised and published.
- *Enhanced Release Format (ERF), Interchange Format (IF) and RefSet Project Group* has been actively pursuing specification development over the last 12 months, primarily the ERF and RefSet proposals. At this time, little attention has been devoted to the IF. Alternative and additional proposals have been received from the community of interest and these have been debated. IHTSDO and CAP-STS have continued to make available release data in ERF form, so that participants can assess the utility of proposed specifications. The provision of further current test materials is being considered by PG members. Current work centres on formulating and agreeing a set of principles or criteria, against which specifications can be objectively measured and assessed. The 'standards for standards' and the OHT tooling initiatives are co-evolving and there are interdependencies between outcomes and recommendations emanating from these projects which will influence the rate of development and progress of these specifications. Further, approaches and outcomes being pursued by the Machine Readable Concept Model PG will need to be aligned with the specifications being developed by this PG. Resourcing issues are a



continuing concern; routine costs of producing Technology Previews as well as the need to fund work in ‘real terms’ is proving to be difficult at this time. Another concern is the level of understanding and participation among the community of interest, which seems to be low, and the level of priority given to the PGs work plan. It has been suggested that further information and guidance be made available to the community of interest (particularly MOLF), and that greater engagement with Affiliate members (vendors, users, implementers) be established, and that evidence of their need and demand for enhance release formats would serve as a driver for PG work plan priorities.

AREAS OF FOCUS

At the October 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:

- Evaluation of the progress of Machine Readable Concept Model and Enhanced Release Format projects and providing recommendation on the implementation phase.
- Research and innovation aimed at the implementation and usability of SNOMED CT. This priority has been recognized by the Committee and establishment of *Implementation Special Interest Group* has been recommended to the Management Board. The scope and the reporting lines of the group will be discussed together with Technical Committee, Affiliate Forum and other interested parties at the October Meeting.

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. Pharmacy “is a” Overload – Substance hierarchy (direct report is to Content Committee)