

Briefing Note for the Member Forum and Content Managers Advisory Group 17 May 2022

Updating American Joint Committee on Cancer Allowable Values

Purpose

Pursuant to the recently approved agreement between SNOMED International (SI) and the American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) of the American College of Surgeons, this briefing note is to inform the SNOMED International Member Forum and Content Managers Advisory Group of the in-progress changes that are being made to the AJCC tumor staging content in SNOMED CT.

Background

The AJCC publishes the AJCC Cancer Staging Manual, which is used by many countries to assign values to the characteristics of neoplastic tumors such as size and extent of the primary tumor (T), the involvement of regional lymph nodes (N), and the presence or absence of metastasis (M), known as TNM staging. The manual is currently in its eighth edition.

SNOMED CT has had content related to TNM staging since its initial release in 2002. This content has only been sporadically updated and currently reflects content that was contained in the 5th and 6th editions of the AJCC cancer staging manual.

Issues

The AJCC contacted SNOMED International (SI) to notify us that the current content in SNOMED CT did not reflect the current state of knowledge around cancer staging and that the inclusion of the definitions of each stage for each organ system involved violated their licensing agreement and must be inactivated from SNOMED CT.

After negotiations between SI and AJCC, an agreement was reached to add the existing set of cancer staging allowable values to SNOMED CT with the caveat that all existing outdated content would be removed, no definitions for staging values would be added to SNOMED CT, and attribution to AJCC for donation of the content would be added.

Next Steps

The project to update cancer staging has two phases:

Phase 1

Obtain a comprehensive set of cancer staging allowable values from AJCC.

Allowable values for cancer staging (TNM, stage group, grade), based on the AJCC Cancer Staging Manual 8th edition, will be added as qualifier values to SNOMED CT as a new sub hierarchy under 260245000 |Finding value (qualifier value)|. Qualifier values were chosen since the definition for each allowable value varies depending on the specific organ-system or staging category being applied. The FSN for each of these terms will reflect their source as the AJCC, while the preferred term will simply represent the allowable value itself.

Example:

FSN - American Joint Committee on Cancer cTX (qualifier value)

PT - cTX

Concepts identifying the specific edition of the AJCC cancer staging manual will also be added.

Phase 2

Existing concepts in the clinical finding hierarchy will be inactivated as “Outdated” and “Replaced by” the newly created qualifier values.

Current allowable TNM values are all prefixed by either “c” (clinical) or “p” (pathological). Existing SNOMED CT concepts that do not specify either “c” or “p” will be replaced by allowable values using the “c” prefix. (e.g. T1 will be replaced by cT1).

FIGO (International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics) stage findings will also be replaced with qualifier values representing FIGO allowable stages.

Timeline

It is anticipated that this work will be completed and released in the July 2022 release of SNOMED CT.

Recommendations

It is recommended that Member Forum representatives contact their users who may be affected by these changes to give them advance warning of the changes.

Approvals	Date	Name
Chief Terminologist	May 18, 2022	James T. Case
Director of Content and Mapping	May 17th, 2022	Monica Harry

James T. Case, 2022-05-17