

## A Clear Direction in Q3

by *Don Sweete, CEO*



It is hard to believe that it is October, a chill is in the air and another year is almost complete. This year has been another busy and exciting year for the organisation. The teams have worked hard to continue to push forward with the completion of a long list of work plan items; the online education offerings continue to see increased demand, as does the number of queries from the ever increasing numbers of people using SNOMED CT. Perhaps most exciting is the work in the content and technical areas, as in technical services the authoring tool work done by cross organisational teams has yielded great results, and in the content area we have a clear direction on

how we develop the content our customers need and also what that content will entail.

The Organisation itself is also nearing the end of a long and complex journey to move to the United Kingdom, which will result in more efficiency and allow us to move forward with a more cohesive team to deliver what our customers have been asking us for. I am always asked what our challenges are and it is clear that with demands continuing to increase, scalability is something that we need to achieve. The second challenge we face is our virtual configuration and delivering as a team even though we are scattered across the globe. In looking forward to the October conference, I must thank both teams from IHTSDO and our hosts in Uruguay for setting the stage for what promises to be a very exciting time in Montevideo. I am also confident we will meet the challenges ahead and continue the great string of successes that IHTSDO has had since 2007.

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# Farvel København... Hello London!

*By Kuldip Nijjar, Head of Finance*

2015 is proving to be a significant year in the history of IHTSDO. One of the most significant events is the decision taken by the General Assembly to re-locate the Association and its headquarters from Denmark to the UK.

This decision was taken in April of this year and since then there has been a flurry of activity to ensure that all necessary steps are taken to relocate by the end of 2015. We are pleased to report that a new head office has been secured in the Paddington area of London within easy reach of the nearby transport links. Colleagues are already making use of this office for UK based meetings as we received the keys on 1st October.

Our legal and finance teams have also been busy preparing the various applications to register IHTSDO with the relevant authorities in the UK. Our members, employees, suppliers and affiliates will see a relatively seamless transfer to the new entity with, of course, the necessary consultation being undertaken with everyone along the way. We are hoping by the end of 2015 all will be successfully in place so that our UK entity can officially be launched by 1st January 2016.

Copenhagen has been an amazing host to the Association these past eight years and we now look forward to the continuing success of IHTSDO in London.



Thank you to all those that have supported the relocation initiative and we look forward to welcoming you to London for our April 2016 business meetings.

## Advisory Group Membership Announced

*By Juliet Gole Krarup*

As noted in our Q2 newsletter, IHTSDO has been busy setting up seven new Advisory Groups. Made up of selected members of the Community of Practice and chaired by a member of the IHTSDO Management Team, these groups are meant to conduct specific activities that contribute to the fulfillment of the Management Team's responsibilities or the organisation's mandate. They are intended to be agile in nature, responding to the needs of a growing and changing organisation.

IHTSDO is pleased to announce the membership in these seven new groups. The names of the Advisory Group members and the terms of reference of each group are available on our website via links starting at:

<http://www.ihtsdo.org/participate/join-an-advisory-group>

The selected participants come from 16 different countries, indicating a great diversity of voices and, as always, great challenges in finding appropriate times to hold teleconferences!

Welcome to those advisors who are new to our community, and welcome back to our old friends.

# SNOMED CT Content News

By Ian Green, Business Services Executive

## Content Development Roadmap

The Content Team has been working to specify a documented plan for the next three years of the content being added to the SNOMED CT International release. The Content Roadmap specifies the focus for content development at a high level for the next six releases. The content specified for the next twelve months is based on the agreed workplan that is in place. As such, the content is fixed and changes are only made after consultation with both the IHTSDO Management Board and Member Forum. The remaining four releases specify the intention for content development. For these releases, changes can be made but will be done in consultation with the Content Managers Advisory group, with the changes notified to the Management Board and Member Forum. The Content Roadmap, when agreed, will be published on the IHTSDO website ([www.ihtsdo.org](http://www.ihtsdo.org)).

The plan has been created following Member and management feedback on the requirement to specify future content development activities. The hope is that users will be more informed as to developments, and also will have the opportunity to comment on the projects at the inception stage to shape the deliverables, in addition to during the content authoring stage.

## Drug and Substances Project

IHTSDO's projects to update the drugs and substances hierarchies will deliver visible changes to the content in the January 2016, International Release. The drivers for these changes are the improvement of the quality of SNOMED CT content and also to provide the ability to align and develop linkages to emerging international standards in both of these areas. The changes being made are foundational to the structure of SNOMED CT, and support the use of the content as attributes used to define other concepts. By updating the content we prevent inaccuracies in the following:

### Drugs

Minimize the number of primitive concepts in order leverage the classifier:

- Concepts representing Medicinal Entity (active ingredient) or Medicinal Form (active ingredient + dose form) will be fully defined;
- Concepts representing chemical classification or mechanism of action will be retained if they can be fully defined;
- Concepts that cannot be fully defined will be considered for retirement.

Minimize the number of concepts being retired:

- Existing concepts that include a product strength will be left as active, primitive concepts (these concepts cannot be fully defined in the existing concept model).

We estimate that 2000 concepts will be fully defined for January 2015 release.

### Substances

Not all substance-related 'Causative Agent' relationships will be retired. The scope of this retirement is only the few grouper concepts that are currently tied to therapeutic grouper substances (e.g. Ulcer healing drug allergy (disorder)). Overall, little to no impact is expected on the allergy hierarchy, the related hierarchies, or other work currently proceeding in relation to these hierarchies. There will be a general overall improvement in the quality and safety of these hierarchies following implementation of these changes.

At the moment, there are a large number of incorrect inferences in these related hierarchies due to concepts containing therapeutic intention. For clinical safety reasons, it is important that incorrect inferences are not made as they potentially have an effect on the safety of clinical decision support systems. The retirement of the Causative Agent relationship from the affected concepts will result in changes to the inferred descendants; however, any concepts deemed clinically important during the process and currently not stated as an 'is-a' relationship will be given an is-a relationship. The remaining incorrect descendants will be removed.

To minimize the impact on NRCs and end users, for the January 2016 release, only low impact concepts will be retired (e.g. Nasal agent (substance)), allowing the effects to be visible on a small scale in order to show the nature of future changes. The more difficult, higher impact concepts are being targeted for July 2016 release (e.g. anti-infective agent (substance)), as some of these concepts are intricately tied to other hierarchies and have multiple effects on several sections of the hierarchy. This timing will allow Members more time to prepare for these changes and the potential effects on implementations and also to identify and report any issues real or perceived from the changes.

Overall, the impact has been minimized and the changes are being made carefully, leading to an overall better quality and improved clinical safety within these hierarchies, while directly improving the quality of the work done by other projects and implementations on these hierarchies. We would emphasize that the current hierarchy results in a number of incorrect and unsafe inferences, and these changes are targeted to address these issues. Whilst there is obviously an impact on end users of any change on this scale, the alternative is to continue with content that is clearly incorrect.

# IHTSDO's Conference in Uruguay



## *By the IHTSDO Events Team*

With only two weeks to go before IHTSDO lands at the Radisson Montevideo our plans for the forthcoming Business Meeting and SNOMED CT Expo 2015 in Uruguay are almost complete.

This year's October Business Meeting will see many of IHTSDO's new [Advisory Groups](#) meet in person for the first time, a welcome addition to the usual session schedule of our [Governance & Advisory](#) bodies. We are also providing space for nine of our Special Interest and Working Groups to meet – please [click here](#) to see our schedule in full. In terms of social events, our Uruguayan host country reps at [AGESIC/Salud.uy](#) are planning an evening reception on Monday 26th that should provide a warm welcome to all, and IHTSDO's Awards Dinner on Wednesday 28th (in the beautiful [Sofitel Carraso](#)) will be a night not to be missed.

The [SNOMED CT Expo 2015](#) 'Call for Papers' saw an unprecedented number of submissions, with every submitted abstract being reviewed by a committee of five members before consideration for the Program. The review process was not only concerned with the quality of the abstracts but also took account of the relevance to national adoption, innovative implementation, effective deployment, and practical use of SNOMED CT. Decisions also took account of a

need to balance the content of the Expo, with presentations from different countries and from a range of perspectives. We are certain that the resulting [Expo Program](#) will contain something for every level of understanding. In addition, for the first time we will be providing simultaneous translation facilities for our attendees, as well as an entire tutorial stream conducted in Spanish as well as English. IHTSDO would like to thank [Epic](#) for their generous sponsorship of this dual-language tutorial stream.

The vendor exhibition will see many new faces with a very strong representation from regional South American companies. For the first time the program will offer our vendors an opportunity to speak about their systems and how SNOMED is used so that we may all become more familiar with how the terminology is actually used on the ground. We are very excited to see and learn what these companies have to offer and welcome them into our community.

The Events Team would like to remind those who plan to attend in person that registration for both parts of the event is compulsory. Please see IHTSDO's website for more information:

<http://www.ihtsdo.org/participate/attend-ihtsdo-events/>

We hope to see you in Montevideo!

# New Vendor Engagement Strategy

*By Nick Egarhos, Vendor Engagement Lead*

As the new member of the Customer Relations Management team at IHTSDO, I'm delighted to be able to discuss what the vendor engagement initiative is, and how we plan on delivering on the important tasks assigned to us.

The Vendor Engagement Strategy developed by IHTSDO was very clear with respect to the need for change; change not only in how vendors are engaged, but change within the IHTSDO itself to support this new approach of embedding vendor considerations into everything that we do. To that end, 5 programs (with 13 sub-programs) were identified in an attempt to quantify this change and provide an overall scope of what needs to be accomplished in order for IHTSDO to meet its goals.

Over the next 12 months we will be tackling several of these programs, with the intent of delivering on several key objectives:

**1. Building the next stage of vendor communications:**

Developing the key messages that reflect IHTSDO's direction vis-à-vis who we are, what we do, and the desire to partner with vendors to ensure the product addresses their needs and their customers needs.

**2. Vendor Liaison Forum definition and execution:**

Establishing this Forum is critical in demonstrating IHTSDO's desire to engage

and include vendors in the ongoing development of SNOMED CT. The Forum will be an important information gathering and sharing tool for IHTSDO, where we will be able to determine if/how vendors are using the product, provide guidance and alternatives on how to use the product, discuss support and education opportunities offered by IHTSDO, etc.

**3. Vendor Communications and Requirements Channel:**

Developing the internal capacity and processes for receiving, validating, approving, prioritizing and implementing vendor requirements, and communicating this to vendors.

**4. Vendor Pilot:**

Identify a vendor that does not currently include SNOMED CT in their product, but is open to including it e.g. a vendor that is re-platforming their product will have the opportunity to implement from scratch. This project will provide IHTSDO with the experience in supporting a vendor through this process, from which a toolkit can be built for use by other vendors going forward.

I'm looking forward to working with the very talented team at IHTSDO to deliver on these objectives and move our organisation forward in its role global experts in healthcare terminology.



Delivering  
**SNOMED CT**

The IHTSDO Newsletter provides news and features from IHTSDO, delivering SNOMED CT. If you have comments on the editorial content, then please contact the editor, Fleur McBriar, at [fmc@ihtsdo.org](mailto:fmc@ihtsdo.org)