



SPAIN JOINS GLOBAL HEALTH TERMINOLOGY EFFORT

Spanish Ministry of Health and Social Policy becomes a Member of IHTSDO

- **11 more countries apart from Spain belong to IHTSDO, an organisation aiming to spread the use of a standardised clinical terminology called SNOMED CT.**
- **The use and diffusion of this terminology within health record systems will improve the accuracy of clinical information and its multilingual interpretation, which will contribute to improved patient safety.**
- **The Ministry of Health and Social Policy, in coordination with the Regional Authorities, works in the development of Electronic Health Records within the National Health System.**

July 14th, 2009. Spain, through the Ministry of Health and Social Policy, is now one in the group of countries that are part of International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO). Spain joins the **global effort to develop, maintain and spread the use of a clinical terminology called SNOMED CT** (Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine-Clinical Terms).

Spain is the third country joining IHTSDO after Charters Members (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Netherlands, United States of America, New Zealand, Lithuania, United Kingdom and Sweden) **plus Singapore and Cyprus**, that joined in 2008.

“We are delighted to welcome Spain as a new member of IHTSDO”, says Martin Severs, Chair of IHTSDO’s Management Board. He also added “Our work on health terminology standards is a global effort to respond to needs that we all share. By pooling our experiences and our resources, we can make more progress than any one country could do on its own, which benefits patients and health professionals in all of our nations”.

The use of a standardised clinical terminology like SNOMED CT, to describe the information that health records contains, promotes consistency, accuracy, and reliability of health information and contributes to improved patient safety.

“SNOMED CT is already being used in Spain in some specific cases by some professional groups and institutions. What we aim now is to boost the use in the Spanish health organizations and in coordination with the Regional Authorities” says Javier Etreros, director of the Project “Electronic Health Record within the National Health System”

In joining IHTSDO, Spain will be able to distribute the international core of this standard to all the public and private organizations that need to use it within the Spanish territory. Furthermore, Spanish experts’ participation in the different IHTSDO working groups and committees, will ensure that future versions of SNOMED CT give better support to the Spanish system’s unique characteristics.

All of this will permit that the main standardised health terminology in the world (**used in more than 40 countries**) will be available in the all Spanish territory to be used, in the electronic health records as well than in information systems that measure the health care assistance activity results, clinical investigation and other applications.

In the semantic interoperability roadmap, designed by the Ministry of Health and Social Policy at the beginning of 2008, the goals to enable exchange of information between different health record systems (including different languages) were identified. The use of SNOMED-CT terminology is one of these goals.

The Ministry keeps working in coordination with the Regional Authorities to develop the **Electronic Health Record within the National Health System (EHRNHS)**. The objective of this project is to guarantee, to citizens and health professionals the access to all the relevant clinical information needed in the health care assistance process, from any point within the National Health System.