A person wearing blue scrubs is shown from the waist up. They are holding a clipboard with several papers in their left hand and a handheld electronic device in their right hand. The background is a bright, slightly blurred white.

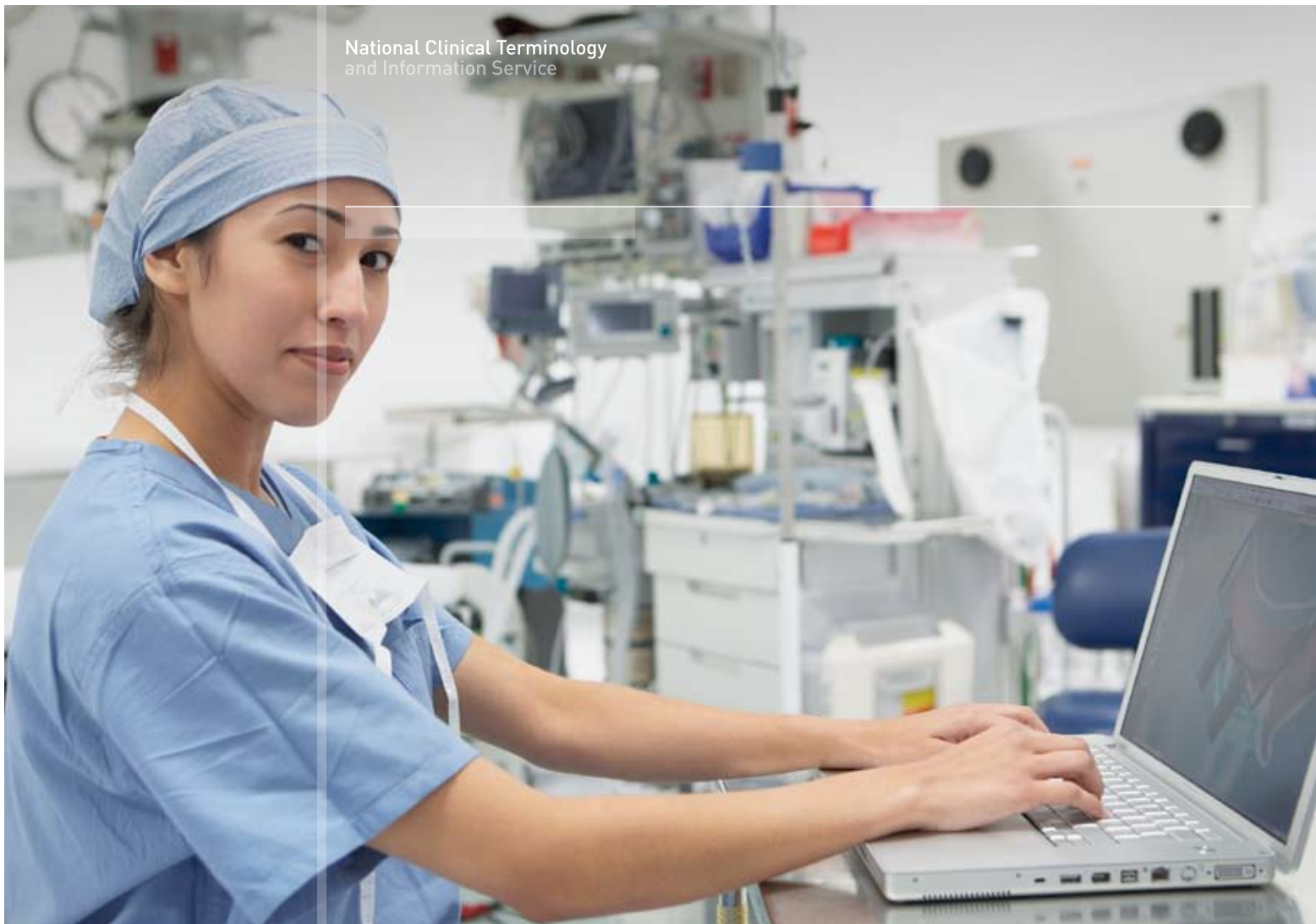
National Clinical Terminology
and Information Service

SNOMED CT-AU FAQs

National Clinical
Terminology and Information
Service (NCTIS)

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SNOMED CT-AU

NEHTA established the **National Clinical Terminology and Information Service (NCTIS)** to develop the terminology and information products which support the e-health requirements of the Australian healthcare community.

The way clinical information is described and shared by healthcare providers is vital to improving the quality and safety of healthcare delivery and is fundamental to the success of e-health.

Imperative to capturing this information is a standard clinical language or terminology.

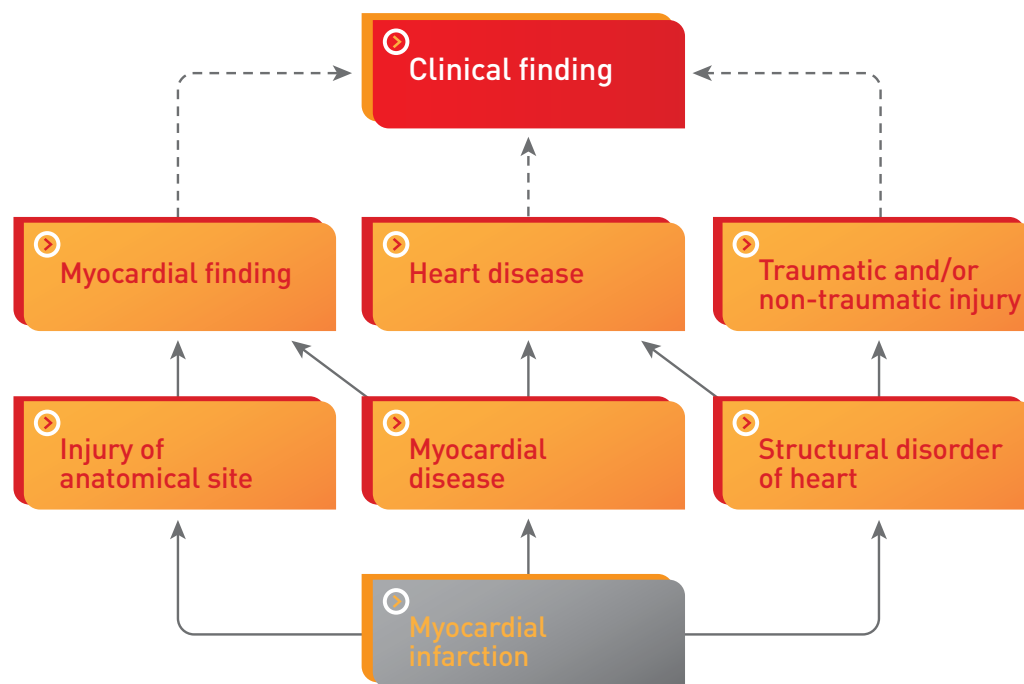
A standard clinical terminology enables the clinical descriptions used in clinical communications to be accurately recorded and consistently interpreted. A common terminology gives healthcare providers a high level of confidence in the information that they record, send and retrieve, ensuring continuity of care for patients across different times, settings and care providers.

The National Clinical Terminology and Information Service (NCTIS) within NEHTA is responsible for managing, developing and distributing SNOMED CT[®] Australian Release and the Australians Medicine Terminology (AMT) in Australia. This responsibility extends to distributing and licensing SNOMED CT on behalf of the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO[®]).

SNOMED CT (Systemized Nomenclature Of Medicine Clinical Terms), an internationally preeminent clinical terminology, has been identified as the preferred national terminology for Australia and has been endorsed by the Australian, State and Territory governments.

¹ SNOMED CT[®] and IHTSDO[®] are registered trademarks of the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation.

SNOMED CT-AU



SNOMED CT partial modelling of myocardial infarction.

Q: What is SNOMED CT?

A: SNOMED CT provides the core general terminology for the Electronic Health Record (EHR) and contains more than 311,000 active concepts with unique meanings and formal logic-based definitions organised into hierarchies. When implemented in software applications, SNOMED CT can be used to represent clinically relevant information consistently, reliably and comprehensively as an integral part of producing electronic health records.

SNOMED CT is maintained by the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO). Content is continuously reviewed and updated by the IHTSDO and member nations to ensure that SNOMED CT meets evolving user needs.

SNOMED CT-AU

Q: What is SNOMED CT-AU?

A: SNOMED CT Australian Release (SNOMED CT-AU) is the Australian extension to SNOMED CT, and includes the International Release along with all Australian developed terminology and documentation for implementation in Australian clinical IT systems.

SNOMED CT-AU provides local variations and customisations of terms relevant to the Australian healthcare community.

Q: What are the benefits of SNOMED CT-AU?

A: A clinical terminology can aid in providing health professionals with more easily accessible and complete information regarding medical history, illnesses, treatments, laboratory results, and similar facts. Standardised information can facilitate improved patient outcomes, clinical decision support, follow-up, and treatment. It can also facilitate analyses based on coded information from clinical IT systems.

Q: What does the release of SNOMED CT-AU include?

- A:**
- The International Release of SNOMED CT. This terminology comprises a set of 'core' tables of concepts, descriptions, relationships and identifiers to represent clinical information.
 - Reference sets, which are a collection of terms that are grouped together for a particular purpose.
 - The Australian Dialect Reference Set, currently based on the UK dialect.
 - Documentation that explains the release, contents and implementation.
 - Viewers to access the terminology in both Windows® and Mac® versions.

Q: How often are SNOMED CT-AU updates released?

A: SNOMED CT-AU is released every six months in May and November, incorporating new content as it is developed.

Q: Will SNOMED CT-AU always be based on the latest version of the SNOMED CT International Release?

A: SNOMED CT-AU will be updated to the latest version of the SNOMED CT International Release as soon as it is possible to include the changes. This means there may be a delay between receiving the latest International Release and SNOMED CT-AU being updated to the latest version.

SNOMED CT-AU

Q: What are the release formats?

A: Release Format 2 (RF2) is the current release format developed by the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO) to support the creation of reference sets. This will eventually replace Release Format 1 (RF1).

SNOMED CT-AU is distributed in both formats. The core tables of SNOMED CT-AU are released in both RF1 and RF2, while the NEHTA derived reference sets are released in RF2 only. NCTIS will support both these formats for a period of time to allow current implementers to migrate to RF2.

Q: What are reference sets?

A: Reference sets are a collection of SNOMED CT components and clinical descriptions for a particular purpose. One analogy is to think of SNOMED CT-AU as a book – the reference set acts like an index, pointing to a chapter or ‘concept’ that is relevant to a subject. For example, the members of the Pathology Request Test Name reference set are drawn from the Laboratory sub-hierarchy within the Procedures hierarchy of SNOMED CT.

Reference sets serve different purposes. They are:

- Clinical and administrative reference sets are produced to satisfy particular use cases, including healthcare data that directly represents patient care.
- Foundation reference sets are used as a basis from which further use case-specific reference sets are developed.
- Structural reference sets manage extensions, data structures and release formats. These reference sets provide the foundation for SNOMED CT and SNOMED CT-AU release files, and support their implementation.

Q: What is the Australian Dialect Reference Set?

A: The SNOMED CT-AU Australian Dialect Reference Set (ADRS) specifies the Australian specific clinical descriptions and synonyms considered necessary to support the recording of clinical information in Australian e-health implementations. The ADRS is being built to ensure the appropriate Australian content is available in SNOMED CT-AU. Where new content is uniquely Australian, it will be created in an Australian English dialect with language code ‘en-AU’.

SNOMED CT-AU

Q: Do existing local code sets (i.e. non-SNOMED CT-AU) need to be mapped to implemented reference sets?

A: Mapping may be needed when there is migration of legacy data to use SNOMED CT-AU terminology, and when HL7 (Health Level 7) messages are generated and coded information is translated from the local terminology into SNOMED CT-AU for output transmission. As there are safety and quality issues with mapping, caution should be taken.

Q: Can I propose any enhancements to SNOMED CT or SNOMED CT-AU?

A: The NCTIS is committed to the refinement and improvement of our terminology products – the AMT and SNOMED CT-AU. We are also committed to contributing to the refinement and improvement of SNOMED CT, which is managed in Australia by NEHTA on behalf of the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO).

NCTIS provides a Request Submission facility for all Australian licence holders which enables the Australian clinical terminology community to log requests for the creation or modification of terminology content.

The NCTIS will assess and where appropriate ratify your request. Ratified requests for change to SNOMED CT will be logged with the IHTSDO by the NCTIS on your behalf. Ratified requests for change to SNOMED CT-AU will be actioned by the NCTIS.

For further information or guidelines to assist with the submission of requests please refer to the Request Submission page on the NEHTA Secure Website:
<https://nehta.org.au/aht>

SNOMED CT-AU

Q: As a vendor, how do I use NCTIS terminology and implementation recommendations?

A: The best path to take when developing applications using SNOMED CT-AU may be somewhat different for each implementation. Choosing this path will require the implementer to first perform sufficient analysis and design to extract the required SNOMED CT-AU data and store it in a form suitable for their application's/system's needs.

It is critical that before use is made of a given reference set, the implementer fully understands the scope and context that the reference set is intended for use within. This information will be provided as part of the release documentation of any NCTIS produced reference set. It is important to note the scope and type of the reference set to ensure that analysis is performed to correctly import the required attributes.

The extent of the data to be imported is governed by the requirements and design of the incorporating system; hence such decisions are left to the implementer.

Consideration must also be given to maintenance activities. Reference sets are not static and will be further developed or maintained, hence local system updating and maintenance will be required.

Reference sets have a change history tracking mechanism that appends the changed row to the reference set; these contain attributes that identify the status of the row. Local maintenance and update processes should make use of these attributes.

Reference sets may sometimes be useful in providing constrained lists of values that could be used to populate user interfaces. Typically, to achieve this it will be necessary to determine the Preferred or Acceptable Term for the given member concept and use that term to populate the user interface text.

For assistance refer to the SNOMED CT-AU Reference Set Implementation Guide which is included in the terminology release files and available from the Downloads section on the NEHTA Secure Website: <https://nehta.org.au/aht> for all licence holders.

Q: What is the current status of development for mapping SNOMED CT to ICD-10?

A: The IHTSDO Mapping Special Interest Group is currently undertaking the mapping of SNOMED CT to ICD-10. The NCTIS plans to leverage this work and extend the mapping to include ICD-10-AM.

Q: How do I submit SNOMED CT-AU feedback?

A: As a user of SNOMED CT-AU, your feedback is critical to ensuring the terminology and its practical use is safe and of high quality. Feedback can be sent to: terminologies@nehta.gov.au



Education Resources

Q: What education / training courses for SNOMED CT are available from NCTIS?

A: NCTIS has released two video-lectures for our user community about the many benefits and uses of SNOMED CT:

SNOMED CT Overview

SNOMED CT Basics

The lectures are available online on the NEHTA YouTube Channel, downloadable via the NCTIS Secure Website or may be ordered on DVD.

To access the online version or to order the DVD please navigate to the Education Resources located on the NCTIS Secure Website: <https://nehta.gov.au/aht>

IHTSDO

Q: Who are IHTSDO?

A: The International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisation (IHTSDO) is a not-for-profit association that develops and promotes the use of SNOMED CT to support safe and effective health information exchange.

SNOMED CT is a clinical terminology and is considered to be the most comprehensive, multilingual healthcare terminology in the world.

Further information on IHTSDO and its operations can be found at:

<http://www.ihtsdo.org>

Q: Does Australia have any representation within the IHTSDO governance arrangements?

A: NEHTA has formal representation on the Management Board of the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organisations (IHTSDO). Australia is also represented on the General Assembly, each of the IHTSDO's Standing Committees, and many of its Working Groups. Australia's list of sponsored appointees is available at: <http://www.ihtsdo.org/members/au00>

Any interested Australian can participate in the IHTSDO Working Groups and Affiliate Forum. Working Groups are open, collaborative and supportive bodies and work is conducted using teleconference and web-based portals for sharing ideas and debate. The Affiliate Forum is open to any holder of a SNOMED CT Affiliate Licence.

Further information relating to the IHTSDO governance and advisory structure can be found at:

<http://www.ihtsdo.org/about-ihtsdo/governance-and-advisory>

Information about access to the IHTSDO Working Groups and Affiliate Forum can be found at:

<http://www.ihtsdo.org/about-ihtsdo/collaborative-space>

Q: How do I learn more about the IHTSDO and what they are doing, including work on user interface options?

A: For more information on IHTSDO and their latest work program, visit: <http://www.ihtsdo.org>

SNOMED CT-AU Licences

Q: What are the SNOMED CT-AU Licensing Agreements?

A: The release of SNOMED CT within Australia occurs under a dual licensing model. You are required to hold two licences to use SNOMED CT in Australia. These licences are:


- For use of the SNOMED CT International Release only, a SNOMED CT Affiliate Licence Agreement is held with IHTSDO; and
- For use of the NEHTA National Release (which includes the International Release), both a SNOMED CT Affiliate Licence Agreement and an Australian National Terminology Release Licence Agreement which includes Australian SNOMED CT extensions, derivatives and other licensable materials.

Q: Are there any cost involved for me as an Australian licence holder?

A: No. Your licence will continue to be free of charge so that software developers and users of SNOMED CT within Australia have guaranteed free and ongoing access to SNOMED CT for use in their products or organisations.

Q: How do I obtain a licence to use NCTIS's terminology products?

A: To apply for licences to use AMT or SNOMED CT-AU please register your request via the Online Registration form on the NEHTA Secure Website: <https://nehta.org.au/aht> and follow the steps.

A close-up photograph of a person wearing blue medical scrubs. The person is holding a clipboard with a pen in their left hand and a handheld electronic device in their right hand. The background is a solid orange color.

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