

MEDICATION SPECIFICATIONS

Release Notes

22 August 2006

NEHTA announces the release of specifications to standardise how medications are identified, named, and described.

Currently there are no standards relating to how medications are identified, named and described by computer systems used Australian healthcare. This limits the extent to which medication information can be electronically exchanged between healthcare professionals. A reliance upon paper-based systems limits the efficiency with which healthcare can be delivered, and can also risk patient safety.

NEHTA has now released specifications aimed at standardising the identification, naming, and describing of medicine information. These specifications are:

- Medication Data Specification, and
- Australian Medicines Terminology Technical Specification.

UML Class diagrams complement both specifications and explain relevant information structures, concept names and data types in a concise, industry-standard format.

Medication Data Specification

NEHTA's Medication Data Specification defines standard requirements for the electronic collection and exchange of data used in prescribing, dispensing, administering and reviewing medications to individuals.

The Medication Data Specification standardises the language used to name and describe clinical concepts related to medications, for use by computer system designers where medication information is to be captured, stored, exchanged or displayed.

In addition to this Medication Data Specification, which is context-independent, NEHTA is developing further specifications to record and report medication information for specific needs – for example e-prescribing, admission and discharge medications and medication lists for shared electronic health records. These context-specific specifications will all use the definitions and structures from this Medication Data Specification.

The Medication Data Specification forms part of a suite of data specifications that NEHTA is developing. The suite comprises specifications for a range of health topics or "data groups", such as medications and adverse reactions and

alerts, which are generally agreed to be of high priority to standardise.

This Medication Data Specification is to be used in conjunction with other relevant NEHTA specifications, in particular the Australian Medicines Terminology.

Australian Medicines Terminology

The Australian Medicines Terminology delivers standard identification of branded and generically equivalent medicines and their components, and standard naming conventions and terminology, to accurately describe medications. The terminology is for use by medication management computer systems, in both primary and secondary healthcare.

The ongoing development of the Australian Medicines Terminology will be consistent with international standards, as NEHTA is working in collaboration with the UK's NHS Dictionary of Medicines and Devices and the SNOMED CT Pharmacy Working Group.

The Technical Specifications are part of a set of documents being developed by NEHTA to describe the scope, purpose, use, technical structures, governance and editorial policy of the Australian Medicines Terminology.

Ongoing Development

Because the development of a terminology and data specifications is an iterative process, these specifications will evolve to accommodate changes in healthcare practices and feedback from users that share medication information between systems.

Further Information

All NEHTA specification releases, along with associated recommended Australian and international standards, are available through NEHTA's Standards Catalogue at www.nehta.gov.au. Comments and feedback on the specifications can be sent to:

Medicines Data Specification
email clininfo@nehta.gov.au.

Australian Medicines Terminology
email medicines@nehta.gov.au.