

DISCHARGE SUMMARY CONTENT SPECIFICATIONS

Release Notes

21 December 2006

NEHTA announces the release of specifications to standardise the information content of hospital discharge summaries in Australia.

The increasing demand for health information to be electronically exchanged between hospitals and general practice triggers an urgent need for national standards specifying the content and structure of information in hospital discharge summaries. Currently, the information content and structures in hospital discharge summaries may vary from hospital to hospital. This limits the ability of hospitals and general practice to safely and reliably share critical health information electronically. In order to overcome this, NEHTA has developed and released specifications to standardise the hospital discharge summaries across Australia.

Discharge Summary Specification

The NEHTA *Discharge Summary Content Specification* forms part of a suite of specifications that NEHTA is developing for the Australian healthcare sector. NEHTA is developing specifications for both particular health topics (i.e. foundation "data groups" such as "problem/diagnosis", "clinical intervention", and "adverse reactions", "medication item") and for structured clinical documents such as discharge summaries and referrals, which make use of these foundation data groups.

The specifications that NEHTA are developing are of high priority to standardise, in order to effectively achieve level 4 (semantic) interoperability in the Australian healthcare setting. Semantic interoperability means that the information exchanged different computer systems is interpretable by both the computer applications and by human users.

The *Discharge Summary Specification* encompasses standard specifications for the content and structure of a typical discharge summary, and can be used in a range of clinical settings (e.g. an emergency department visit or an admission encounter) where relevant clinical information might be captured, stored, exchanged or displayed.

NEHTA data specifications are aimed at standardising the information structure and language used to name and describe clinical concepts, and to provide the necessary contextual constraints to remove potential ambiguity in clinical statements. They are not intended to be software or messaging design specifications. Instead, they represent the clinical information requirements for data collection and exchange required for facilitating safe and effective continuity of care across the different healthcare sectors, i.e. General Practice and hospitals.

It is expected that the discharge summary specifications will be used in conjunction with other NEHTA-provided specifications such as the Australian Medicines Terminology and other SNOMED CT based clinical terminologies as they become available.

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

Ongoing Development

Because the development of data specifications is an iterative process, these specifications may evolve in response to changing healthcare practices, workflow and information requirements. NEHTA continues to accept feedback from the healthcare industry as an ongoing commitment to the development of quality standards specifications.

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 *Discharge Summary Content Specification* can be emailed to: clininfo@nehta.gov.au.