BMA House, Tavistock Square, London, WC1H 9JP
T 020 3058 7463
E gfentiman@bma.org.uk

Joint GP IT Committee
BMA & RCGP

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Dear LMCs and Practices,

Re: SNOMED

As you will all be aware SNOMED CT will become the default NHS coding system replacing the Read and CTV3 coding systems in all GP clinical systems. The changeover will begin in April 2018. We understand from a number of LMCs and practices that there are questions and concerns surrounding this move and we hope that this letter will provide some clarification on those issues and point to resources that practices can refer to in advance of the changeover.

We can confirm that

- All[1] current GP Read and CTV3 Codes each have their own equivalent SNOMED CT code. Therefore, all of the terms currently used by GPs and their staff will be identical or very similar in SNOMED CT.
- All data previously coded in Read or CTV3 will be retained but beginning from April 2018 clinical systems will move to selecting from the SNOMED CT codes as the primary entry.
- In the background the systems will also automatically add the equivalent Read or CTV3 code in a process of dual coding.
- Most systems have in fact been automatically dual coding the equivalent SNOMED CT codes in the background for some time as part of the run up to the changeover.
- The mapping tables that enable this dual coding have been verified nationally with input from the Joint IT Committee of the GPC and RCGP (JGPITC).

What will happen from April 2018 is the priority for code pickers or selectors will swap from Read or CTV3 to SNOMED CT. There will be a transition period of continued dual coding for at least 1 year. This transition period is to ensure that reports and functionalities that rely on Read or CTV3 codes will still work after the switchover even though the primary records are being created in SNOMED CT. All national reporting such as QUOF and DESs will continue with the intention that they will be replaced by nationally approved and verified SNOMED CT based reports from April 2019 onwards. Locally authored reports may need to be reviewed, as new SNOMED codes are introduced, there will be no equivalent Read or CTV3 code and thus searches and reports will become less reliable over time.

All GPSoC clinical system suppliers have been involved since 2014 in the work leading up to this changeover and more recently have been working with their relevant user groups to develop code selectors or picking lists that act as seamlessly as possible. NHS Digital have been assuring any technical changes to GPSoC systems.

The intention is to minimise any additional workload on practices as a result of the move, in most cases the changeover for end users should be almost unnoticeable. More detailed information on deployments will be available once the first roll-outs have begun in early 2018.

There are a variety of on-line tools that have been set up to assist LMCs, Practices, GPs and their staff[2]. A web site has been set up to demonstrate SNOMED CT equivalent codes[3] where codes can be searched for – you can enter a Read or CTV3 code and it will provide you with the SNOMED CT equivalent[4]. NHS Digital have also produced an overview webex[5] which has run every week since January and will be continue to run once a month; there is also a recorded version. More information and resources can also be found here[6]. The JGPITC also recommends these two quick videos[7, 8]
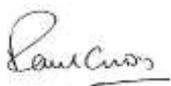
NHS Digital has already begun to communicate these messages to CCGs who in turn should pass this information onto general practices as part of their responsibilities for the delivery of GP IT, as outlined in the GP IT Operating Model[9]. NHS England have informed CCGs of the need to appoint a named SNOMED CT lead and 99% of CCGs now have one. Some CCGs have already planned SNOMED CT training for later this year and will have more details from the suppliers regarding the switch over. NHS Digital have run face-to-face workshops for CCGs, CSUs and IT service providers.

Supplier roadmaps and implementation plans, where available, are provided by NHS Digital. These will be updated as plans progress.

- Microtest are advertising training for later this year and there are extensive SNOMED resources, PowerPoint Presentations, screenshots and training information for practice staff and clinicians at www.microtest.co.uk/snomed-ct-resources/. The company have written to practices offering a number of SNOMED training courses at various locations.
- EMIS have made available their current proposed code picker to download via the EMIS support centre; they are asking for feedback and have plans to make further updates before they go live.
- TPP are currently in the process of developing and assuring the new SystmOne SNOMED functionality in co-operation with NHS Digital and will release detailed documentation on how SystmOne will interact with SNOMED within the next month.
- In Practice Systems will soon be releasing a customer-facing FAQ document, as well as continuing to engage with the user group on the interface designs for code selection in Vision.

We would recommend that practices work with their CCG SNOMED leads and look at the educational material from NHS Digital and their clinical system suppliers.

Yours sincerely

Dr Paul Cundy
GPC Co-Chair of the Joint GP IT
Committee

Dr Manpreet Pujara
RCGP Co-Chair of the Joint GP IT
Committee

References

1   While every Read code maps to an appropriate SNOMED CT concept, and the original text is visible when viewing a record, some Read codes are unsuitable for future use and will therefore be retired and no longer available. These differences are captured in a Data Quality Guidance document; this has been widely communicated to all CCGs, trainers and data quality leads, download in Word from https://hscic.kahootz.com/gf2.ti/f/762498/30503621.1/DOCX/-/Data_Quality_Guidance_for_Primary_Care.docx

2   https://digital.nhs.uk/SNOMED-CT-implementation-in-primary-care

3   https://hscic.kahootz.com/connect.ti/t_c_home/view?objectId=300115

4   https://termbrowser.nhs.uk/?perspective=full&conceptId1=404684003&edition=uk-edition&release=v20171001&server=https://termbrowser.nhs.uk/sct-browser-api/snomed&langRefset=999001261000000100,999000691000001104

5   https://hscic.kahootz.com/connect.ti/t_c_home/view?objectId=308531

6   https://hscic.kahootz.com/connect.ti/t_c_home/view?objectId=299987&exp=e1

7   "A quick guide to SNOMED CT" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7jM4O_EfxI

8   "Searching for symptoms" https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sG3jt51ysAw

9   https://www.england.nhs.uk/digitaltechnology/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2015/04/gp-it-operating-model-16-18.pdf