

# Governing quality in translation of SNOMED CT

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## Abstract and objective

*Translation of SNOMED CT is part of the national IT-strategy for health and welfare. The strategy identifies the Swedish special language for health and welfare as interdisciplinary and including of meta concepts with definitions, classifications and SNOMED CT. The special language is also a vital part of the national information structure and should be reliable and safe to use. The European effort to make it possible for the patient to share health data with a physician in another country is yet another aspect of quality in translation. The translation of concepts from one language to another is therefore of big importance. This poster points out one of the quality issues: the choice of and the qualification of recommended terms. The framework and process are vital to the outcome and the question we want the answer to is: will the recommended term be accepted by the professionals? This poster discusses used methods and lessons learned.*

## Keywords:

Terminology, SNOMED CT, Translation

## Methods

Two vital workflows were recognized for the recommended term. The first is the translation process and the second is the qualification process. The Swedish translation process is based upon the Danish experiences.

The used translation process includes four main steps: selection of subsets, translation including translation review, translation quality review by clinicians and editorial supervision. The competencies of the translation team include professional translators, terminologists and health care professionals.

The translation team follows IHTSDO's<sup>1</sup> linguistic guidelines adopted to Swedish. Decisions regarding problematic translations are taken on a weekly basis by the editorial board and disseminated to the translation team. Quality checkpoints in the translation process are if the translated concept and the recommended term are accepted by the quality reviewer and if the concordance is consistent.

The translation process is followed by the qualification process including clinical validation with mapping and validation towards a medical corpus.

## Results

By the end of September 2010 the translation will be completed and the Swedish version of SNOMED CT will go into maintenance. During the translation workflow 10 % of the concepts and recommended terms are rejected by the quality reviewers and sent back to the translator. Less than 5 % of all concepts and recommended terms are considered problematic and sent to the editorial board. Throughout the translation there has been a great need for editorial decisions. One reason is that the Swedish medical language uses a mixture of Swedish, Latin, Greek and English terms. Another reason, especially in the beginning, was that the translation team was unfamiliar with the structure of SNOMED CT. A special effort has been necessary to certify that the concordance is in accordance with the linguistic guidelines and editorial decisions.

It has been important to develop and test methods for qualification of the translation. The test areas include terminology used in a university hospital, quality registers, standard care plans and classifications. We look for missing concepts within the specific areas as well as needs for change of recommended terms or synonyms. The medical corpus has recently been finalized and a first test on diabetes concepts has been performed.

## Conclusion

Lessons learned are that the choice of recommended term is dependent on the context which means that a concept can be expressed with more than one term in Swedish, and therefore this choice is important to the professional understanding. The editorial decisions are vital to the quality of the translation and in the end to the professional acceptance of the recommended term. In this learning process the most important resource is the translation team as a whole and the knowledge built up. For other countries taking on this process it will be essential to have an interdisciplinary translation team and editorial board, and to assure that the team members have sufficient knowledge about concept based translation and SNOMED CT.

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<sup>1</sup> International Health Terminology Standard Development Organization