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SNOMED CT
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Implementation Guidance for Annual Release of SNOMED CT Reference Sets

Routinely, SNOMED CT releases are published twice yearly whether International or National releases. Derivative products are subject to different time pressures and are released at different times and frequencies. All derived products are based upon a specified International and National 'full' SNOMED CT release.

The license obligations for users of SNOMED CT include the undertaking to maintain all products which use SNOMED CT so that content in use is updated as quickly as possible after a release, and is updated before the next release. Clearly there is a need to periodically respond to changes in SNOMED CT by updates to systems. In addition, there may be explicit contractual or legislative obligations upon respective parties. Conversely, data in persistent clinical records is expected to retain the original identifiers used at the time of its writing. Moving to an annual release of reference sets has an effect on this, and it should be noted that the annual release of reference sets does not exclude the licensee from updated to the most recent version of the International (or National) SNOMED CT release.

The following detail is aimed at supporting the implementers of internationally published reference sets.

Implementation of Reference Sets in Relation to the SNOMED CT International Release

When reference sets are released in RF2 (SNOMED CT Release Format), each is allocated an "Effective Date". The "Effective Date" identifies which SNOMED CT release the reference set is aligned to. Moving to annual releases means that during the 12 month release cycle of reference sets, there will be two releases of SNOMED CT. The "Effective Date" of the reference set, will identify the first SNOMED CT release in that period as the release to which the reference set is aligned. Implementers should be aware of this when they implement each SNOMED CT release, and ensure that the release SNOMED CT and the reference set(s) are aligned.

Feedback on an issue related to implementation of reference sets in relation to the SNOMED CT release, should be submitted to info@snomed.org.