Informatics standards for better and safer pathology reporting and requesting

Legg, M (Michael Legg & Associates); Moore, D (The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia)

Abstract

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia, with the support of the Department of Health, have been leading a program to standardise pathology information, terminology and units for safety and quality since April 2012.

Pre and post-laboratory phases of the pathology process are known to be where most errors occur in pathology and from recent incident analysis we also know that these errors are among the top ten causes of patient harm (Figure 1). The Pathology Information, Terminology and Units Standardisation (PITUS) project is developing pathology informatics standards aimed at safer improved pathology requesting and reporting, facilitating their uptake and developing means to test conformance and compliance by pathology practices and their customers (Figure 2).

PITUS has previously produced standardised pathology terminology reference sets for requesting and reporting in Australia. This includes Australian preferred terms which are now College Policy. Likewise, standardised units for most tests performed in Australia have been determined and are now policy. The Australian Pathology Units and Terminology—Standards and Guidelines v2.4 is also the vehicle for publishing the work of the AACB working parties on adult normalised reference intervals for 11 analytes and for 9 paediatric ones.

Work was also undertaken on the safe rendering of pathology results including developing standards around cumulative reporting and the safe combination of results from different laboratories.

The next phase of the PITUS project will continue the work on interoperability between systems for both requesting and reporting pathology. As before with the support and direct participation of the many stakeholders including, patients, other clinicians, pathologists, scientists and informaticians it will also develop methods to encourage and test compliance and continue with the development of information models, terminology and safety advice for requestors, report recipients and laboratories.

Figure 2: Why standardise?

Point to point communications between players in pathology requesting and reporting. Red lines are requests. Blue lines are reports.

Information flows between players in pathology requesting and reporting after standardisation.

Acknowledgements

The Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia would like to acknowledge the Department of Health for providing the funding for the PITUS-15-16 project. This project would not be possible without the continued collective efforts of many key stakeholders with deep knowledge of their disciplines and work places.

References


To download the latest version, go to http://www.rcpa.edu.au/Library/Practising-Pathology/PTIS/APUTS-Downloads

For more information

Contact Donna Moore (PITUS-15-16 Project Officer) donnam@rcpa.edu.au