

Welcome to this first update from PITUS, the next phase of work to standardise pathology information structures, terminology and units that began with the successful PUTS project. We will bring you regular updates on progress with Pathology Information, Terminology and Units Standardisation (PITUS) through this newsletter. This issue will highlight the background and aims of this year's project, the people involved and bring you up to date with the milestones reached to date. The set of projects to be completed in the 2013-2014 year will be known as PITUS-14.

Why Standardise?

There is an increasing tendency towards the aggregation of laboratory data in the Australian health sector. The usefulness of this data however is limited due to the wide variability in test reporting practice for pathology tests in Australia. This variability can be seen in test names, units, reporting intervals (decimal places), reference intervals and types of clinical comments.

This variability has the potential to create confusion and misunderstanding as pathology results are viewed by a wider range of people, including requesting doctors, patients, nurses, pharmacists, dieticians and other allied health workers. Additionally pathology data is becoming more likely to be sent to databases such as practice software, national or regional repositories and personal health records. In these settings data from several laboratories may be combined into a single record and removed from, or at least separated from, the original supporting information (name, units, reference intervals etc).

This set of projects aims to implement and assess the introduction of standardised pathology terminology agreed and set out in the Australian Pathology Units and Terminology Standard (APUTS) to minimise the risks from variation in practice amongst requesters and pathology providers. This project follows from the PUTS project which preceded this PITUS project

Standardised pathology information structures and terminologies allow improvement in the recording, decision support, communication and analysis of pathology. In particular the ability to provide semantic interoperability between computer systems enables assurance of fidelity of communication and computer aided support.

Aims of the project

PITUS-14 has 14 sub-projects being worked on by the PITUS Steering Committee and 5 Working Groups:

1. Standards Implementation with implementations supported for pairs of pathology and desktop systems working together.

2. Request Modelling and Terminology to streamline the use of APUTS requesting terminology and to model requesting of genetic tests.

3. Safety in Reporting To ensure all critical information required in a report is transmitted safely.

4. Harmonisation To standardise the display and communication of reference intervals in conjunction with the AACB.

5. Report Modelling and Terminology in particular cytology, cancer and microbiology for registries

Timeline leading up to the PITUS project

Standardisation of pathology terminology has been underway since 1998 when LOINC was identified as an appropriate terminology for reporting observations in the Australian Standard for electronic messaging in pathology. The first set of codes used to identify the test being reported was drawn from LOINC and called AustPath.

In 2002 a set of codes used for requesting was developed by the University of Wollongong and Standards Australia and added to the AustPath codes. Both LOINC and SNOMED CT were considered but without a license for SNOMED and major issues with LOINC a set of mnemonics were chosen by comparing the codes used by 8 laboratories from the private and public sector and choosing a consensus term. At the time it was thought that these could also be used to identify the tests performed as required by the MBS. They are not in widespread use now.

Pathology terminology has been on the NEHTA work program since NEHTA began in 2005. The use of SNOMED for pathology was part of the business case for Australia to join IHTSDO.

NEHTA held a workshop in 2007, where they undertook to produce pathology and DI terminology by July of that year.

In August 2010 NEHTA changed its engagement with Standards Australia. The new plan was subsequently supported by NEHTA, Standards Australia Committee IT-14-6-5, the RCPA e-Health committee and the Pathology Associations Council. This was the foundation for the Pathology Units and Terminology Standardisation Project.

The Major output of the PUTS project was the publication of the Australian Pathology Units and Terminology Standard (APUTS). The PITUS project is the next step in implementing

this Standard in working Medical Practices and their Pathology Providers. The plan included the allocation of project leadership.

It includes assessment of the Requesting and Reporting Services impacts of introducing the APUTS into clinical practice and will also assess safety whilst the project is running.

Those projects that are outlined above were included in an application for support of the secretariat function prepared by the RCPA and submitted to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing. Contracts were signed in May 2013.

As for the PUTS Project, Michael Legg will act as the project manager.

Project Governance and Stakeholders

The PITUS-14 project governance model provides a framework for the implementation and assessment of standardised information models, terminology and units. It is the same approach as for the PUTS Project and for the successful Structured Reporting of Cancer Project.

The Stake Holders

The pathology profession is represented through the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia (RCPA) and the other members of the [Pathology Associations Council \(PAC\)](http://www.pathology.med.pro) www.pathology.med.pro. The profession will define and endorse the implementation of this project.

The National Clinical Terminology and Information Service (NCTIS) within the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) is responsible for managing, developing and distributing SNOMED CT in Australia.

The Standards Australia Subcommittee IT-014 provides the main link to Australian and international health informatics standards development, software developers and users through IT-14-6-5, the Diagnostics .

The customers include healthcare consumers eg Clinicians and associated healthcare providers; Researchers; Health software developers and knowledge resource

developers; Local Terminology & Information Integrators and Clinical Terminology & Information Users.

PAC Members, besides the RCPA, collaborating in the project include: The Australian & New Zealand Society of Blood Transfusion; Australian Association of Clinical Biochemists; Australian Association of Pathology Practices; Australian Institute of Medical Scientists; Australian Society for Microbiology; Australian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy; Australian Society of Cytology; Endocrine Society of Australia; Haematology Society of Australia and New Zealand; Health Informatics Society of Australia; Human Genetics Society of Australasia; International Academy of Pathology Limited and the National Coalition of Public Pathology .

Health Informatics and industry associations are represented by: Standards Australia; IHTSDO representatives; NEHTA; HISA, HIMAA, MSIA, AIIA and others.

Government agencies and authorities; ACSQHC, AIHW, Cancer Australia, Health Departments, Registries

The project has received funding from the Australian Department of Health and Ageing.

The Steering Committee

The steering committee is chaired by Michael Legg. The committee was assembled in June 2013 inviting all PUTS Committee Members to be part of the PITUS project. This Committee reports to the RCPA Informatics Advisory Committee and thence to the RCPA Executive, the Department of Health and Aging and the National e-Health Transition Authority.

The Working Groups

The working groups responsible for the execution of the PITUS project are:

1. Standards Implementation with implementations supported for pairs of pathology and desktop systems working together. Michael Legg and Graham Jones working with NEHTA and MSIA.

2. Request Modelling and Terminology to streamline the use of APUTS requesting terminology and to model requesting of genetic tests. Chaired by Laurie Bott.

3. Safety in Reporting To ensure all critical information required in a report is transmitted safely. Chaired by Janney Wale.

4. Harmonisation To standardise the display and communication of reference intervals in conjunction with the AACB. Chaired by the AACB nominee.

5. Report Modelling and Terminology in particular cytology, cancer and microbiology for registries. Co-chaired by David Ellis and Vitali Sintchenko.

Please note: In all cases public consultation will be sought on the output from the working groups in the PITUS14 project.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is LOINC?

LOINC (Logical Observation Identifiers Names and Codes) was developed by the Regenstrief Institute in Indiana, USA, to provide a definitive standard for identifying clinical information in electronic reports. One of the main goals of LOINC is to facilitate the exchange and pooling of results for clinical care, outcomes management, and research. LOINC codes are intended to identify the test result or clinical observation. The latest release version 2.38 (2011-12-3) contains 68,350 terms, an increase of 3,346 since the June 2011 version. For more detailed information visit: <http://loinc.org>

Michael Legg

Chair PITUS Steering Committee

11 July 2013

Website & Newsletters

A PITUS webpage is being finalised at this time. Output from the working groups will be available for comments and future reference. Our next Newsletter will have the contact details and web address but if you wish to comment in the interim please forward comments to:

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As PITUS is an extension of PUTS the webpage providing background for this project can be accessed at

<http://www.rcpa.edu.au/Publications/puts.htm>