



Public Health Surveillance Community (PHSC) Terms of Reference

Purpose

To define the Terms of Reference of the Public Health Surveillance Community (PHSC) in support of standards-based electronic immunization data exchange in Canada.

Context

Canada Health Infoway (Infoway) is re-establishing the Public Health Surveillance Community to engage with all key stakeholders with a primary focus on immunization projects in Canada. The members of the PHSC will convene, discuss, determine, and support SNOMED CT and other related standards-based encoding and sharing of immunization related data.

Communicable Diseases, outside of vaccine preventable diseases, are currently “out of scope”. Should PHSC members express an interest in expanding the scope to include Communicable Diseases, or other Public Health domains, these Terms of Reference can be revisited to support the establishment of additional PHSC working groups.

Infoway is leading and hosting this Community.

Objective

The objective of the PHSC is to provide a forum to share progress and discuss challenges in immunization related content development of SNOMED CT for use in Canada. Members may be asked to provide advice on complex issues that arise in the creation of or updates to vaccine concepts.

The PHSC will also provide input on other standards-based immunization related content, included in vaccine catalogues, in support of immunization repository mapping / configuration and interoperability in Canada.



Scope

The scope for the PHSC, with regard to immunization data, includes new and revised SNOMED CT CA encoded immunization related content and subsets, as required for provincial / territorial / jurisdictional immunization registries and digital health projects. To support this work, the scope also includes consideration of other standards-based content included in vaccine catalogues. Business requirements include immunization record keeping, adverse events following immunization (AEFI) reporting, immunization status and vaccine inventory management.

Because the scope includes content that may be defined by other expert groups, the PHSC (chair or designate) will actively reach out to experts/ expert groups to define / confirm pan-Canadian content (e.g., National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI), Vaccine Vigilance Working Group (VSWG), Canadian Immunization Registry and Coverage Network (CIRC), Health Canada, etc.). Examples of such content include: vaccine abbreviations, vaccine market authorization holder (MAH) abbreviations, details and timing of new vaccines coming to the Canadian market.

Decisions on pan-Canadian content may also require exploration of international practices and experiences in using SNOMED CT.

The National Vaccine Catalogue (NVC), launched March 28, 2024, is a reference database maintained and internally managed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). It captures information on vaccine products licensed for use in Canada, including product specific information (e.g., lot number, Drug Identification Numbers, expiry dates) and standardized terminology (i.e., Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine Clinical Terms (SNOMED CT) content) to promote interoperability.

The NVC is supported by the Expert User and Data Provider Team (EUDP), The EUDP's scope focuses on the NVC platform, emphasizing core data elements, key use cases, user testing, and informing the configuration of features and functionalities to better align with user needs.

The table below highlights the overlap and key differences in scope for the PHSC and EUDP:

EUDP Terms of Reference	PHSC Scope
Identify and define changes or updates (e.g., new data elements or subsets), related to NVC data sources, to prepare change requests for submission to data providers.	Provide input on existing or future SNOMED CT CA subset requirements. Ensure new content created meets pan-Canadian requirements.



CHI PHSC forum will subsequently deliberate on the specifics of the request for development, which then will be seamlessly integrated into the NVC when ready. Therefore, EUDP members are encouraged to join CHI PHSC to actively engage and further shape these requests brought forward by the group.	Seek out expert advice on complex issues that may arise in the creation or updates to vaccine concepts. Incorporate recommendations into new / updated content.
Data providers will provide input and insight into source data, identify potential data opportunities aligned with user needs, and assess the feasibility of discussed requirements. Additionally, they will facilitate integration with the NVC and ensure data integrity.	Work closely with NVC / EUDP to ensure alignment of “sources of truth” and timing of priorities for new SNOMED CT CA content development.

Activities

Members will:

- Identify a representative who will submit Requests for Changes (RFCs) to Infoway to support provincial / territorial / jurisdictional immunization registries and digital health projects.
- Provide input on additions and changes to the existing pan-Canadian immunization terminology content to support updates to both the terminology and the pan-Canadian subsets as part of their regularly scheduled maintenance releases.
- Participate in discussions about immunization RFCs submissions, as required.
- Provide input on existing or future subset requirements.
- Provide expert advice on complex issues that may arise in the creation or updates to vaccine concepts.
- Propose additional agenda items related to immunization terminology, including advance notice for anticipated products / changes for future requirements.
- Review materials /prepare for the discussion in order to reach resolution during meetings.
- Engage others from their organizations to gather input and feedback, if required.
- Contribute to Quality Assurance (QA) related to immunization concepts and subsets, if required.
- Discuss / provide feedback on content development, editorial guidelines and process challenges.



Organization

Infoway will chair the community meetings and provide secretariat support for the meetings. The chair will:

- Schedule the meetings and Zoom sessions
- Add the meetings on the InfoCentral Events calendar
- Post meeting agendas on the Infoway InfoCentral PHSC Forum prior to meetings
- Post the Power Point presentation(s) after each meeting
- Seek advice from Canadian and international experts to inform discussions / decisions on content development
- Facilitate agreement amongst members on direction to broaden stakeholder collaboration
- Provide updates to the members on the current status of immunization RFCs
- Document RFC decisions in the appropriate RFC InfoRMS tickets

Membership:

The following membership is recommended to ensure the SNOMED CT CA content meets clinical and business requirements:

- Health Canada vaccine SME (mandatory)
- NACI representative (as required)
- VVWG representative (as required)
- CIRC representative
- Jurisdictional public health stakeholders / SNOMED CT end users
- System implementers, from the public or private sector
- NVC and EUDP representative(s)

PHSC membership is open to any interested participants, including jurisdictions across Canada, technology vendors, and immunization system implementers.

Meetings and Communication

- Monthly teleconference / Zoom meetings will be held.
- Meetings will be 60 minutes in length, unless otherwise indicated.
 - PHSC documents (meeting agenda, presentations, supporting materials, etc.) will be provided to members via Infoway's InfoCentral [Public Health Surveillance Community forum](#). Access to the forum is free and publicly available, though members are required to register for a user id to access content.