

Semantic Interoperability in Medicine and Healthcare III

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The special issue of the European Journal for Biomedical Informatics publishes selected peer-reviewed papers of students of the doctoral study at the 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University in Prague. These papers were also presented as lectures given by Ph.D. students during the third workshop on the topic Semantic interoperability in biomedicine and healthcare held on November 22nd, 2012 in Prague. The first workshop on the same topic was held on November 18th, 2010 in Prague, the second on November 24th, 2011 in Prague.

Semantic interoperability addresses issues of how to best facilitate the coding, transmission and use of meaning across seamless health services, between providers, patients, citizens and authorities, research and training. In essence the semantic interoperability goal is to work towards and support collaboration among human actors and stakeholders, rather than only interoperability among computers. The ability of systems to understand exchanged data (semantic interoperability) requires using the same terminology (i.e. classification systems and nomenclatures) and using the same language for communication and its recording (data standards). If information in biomedicine and health care is shared using a free text, a prerequisite for semantic interoperability is the access to its meaning. Existing standards (e.g. EN 13606) suppose the use of globally unique and uniquely defined terms that can be without much difficulty transferred to other classifications (e.g. by means of the Unified Medical Language

System). Probably the best applicable general classification system for healthcare is SNOMED CT. It has arisen by a combination of American SNOMED (created by the Association of American Pathologists) and British Clinical Terms ("Read Codes"). In connection with this merger the International Health Terminology Standards Development Organization (IHTSDO), with the residence in Denmark, was founded in 2007. IHTSDO is a not-for-profit association that develops and promotes use of SNOMED CT to support safe and effective health information exchange. SNOMED CT is a clinical terminology and is considered to be the most comprehensive, multilingual healthcare terminology in the world. SNOMED CT is now being used in a number of information systems for recording of clinical information within patient records. It is expected from modern information systems to work effectively with information and to exchange it mutually.

The task of the workshop, supported by the project of the specific research at the 1st Faculty of Medicine of Charles University, is to present selected terms from papers of students and to make their description in English and classification by SNOMED CT and ICD10. Then the translations of these findings to the Czech language are also presented at the workshop. Partial semantic interoperability is supported by creation of semantically sound and focused subsets of terms coded in SNOMED CT and ICD 10 that have immediate relevance to Ph.D. theses.