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First edition
2009-12-15

Health informatics — Guidelines for terminology development organizations

*Informatique de santé — Lignes directrices pour établir une
normalisation de la terminologie internationale des soins de santé*



Reference number
ISO/TR 12309:2009(E)

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Published in Switzerland

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Foreword

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In exceptional circumstances, when a technical committee has collected data of a different kind from that which is normally published as an International Standard ("state of the art", for example), it may decide by a simple majority vote of its participating members to publish a Technical Report. A Technical Report is entirely informative in nature and does not have to be reviewed until the data it provides are considered to be no longer valid or useful.

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ISO/TR 12309 was prepared by Technical Committee ISO/TC 215, *Health informatics*.

Introduction

Healthcare terminological systems (terminologies) are developed to support accurate representation, communication and analysis of information about the healthcare of individuals and populations. The development and maintenance of healthcare terminologies require a robust and sustainable infrastructure and processes so that safe and consistent representation and interpretation of data and information can be supported over time.

Those wishing to use a specific terminological system (terminology), adopt it as a national or International Standard or incorporate it into other International Standards, need assurance that the required infrastructure, policies and processes are in place. This Technical Report gives a non-exhaustive list of principles and high-level processes that should be exhibited by a terminology development organization (hereafter referred to as *organization* in order to distinguish it from other kinds of organization) if it is to provide this assurance and support international healthcare terminology standardization.

Terminology standardization in general differs from other standardization in that it should address the language and cultural differences inherent in terminology itself. Standardization related to healthcare terminologies differs significantly from many other International Standards activities because of the technical nature of the content and the rapid versioning that is required. Specifically, terminologies often require a highly responsive *organization* that can accommodate the complex harmonization of nuanced “concepts”, while maintaining longitudinal consistency and utility. Furthermore, terminologies often form the foundation of many dependent systems, applications and operations, and thus should achieve a reliability and rigour coupled with availability and dissemination that are not always required of other standards. A “safety-critical” example is the use of terminologies in healthcare decision support systems such as drug interaction warnings for prescribing support.