Introduction to SNOMED CT

Currently there are two versions of clinical codes (Read v2 and CTV3) in existence within general practice, so not all GP systems use the same coding system and they do not provide the sophisticated features now expected from a clinical terminology.

The NHS needs a single clinical terminology (SNOMED CT) in order for clinical data to be exchanged accurately and consistently across all care settings; this will enable better patient care and improve the analysis and reporting of clinical data.

Systems used by, or communicating coded clinical data to, General Practice service providers will use SNOMED CT as the clinical terminology within the system. The Principal Clinical System suppliers (GPSoC) are currently designing their systems for the use of SNOMED CT in general practice and are developing their deployment schedules. In order to minimise disruption at year-end, SNOMED CT will go live in primary care from April 2018 in a phased approach and the deployment rollout will not commence until the 2017/2018 end of year processes are completed for GP practices.

Secondary Care, Acute Care, Mental Health, Community systems and other systems used in the direct management of care of an individual are to use SNOMED CT before 1 April 2020, although a number already do use SNOMED CT.

SNOMED CT is an international terminology and this will enable the UK to participate more effectively in research and analysis of health information to support national and global health care improvements.