

# Getting the SNOMED Ball Rolling in Australia

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by Helen Moore

## Letter to the Editor, *Journal of AHIMA*

After reading the July-August 2004 *Journal of AHIMA*, I wanted to express my interest in the article by Jack Bowie, "Four Options for Implementing SNOMED." It was pleasing to read an article on SNOMED that focused on HIM operations and, more importantly, the integration of SNOMED into these operations, as opposed to altering HIM tasks to accept SNOMED.

Research shows that in Australia and internationally, although we have recognized the benefits that SNOMED CT offers, we have a long way to go before it will be implemented effectively and used to its full potential.

As an introduction of SNOMED content and capabilities, Australian healthcare organizations would benefit from government support similar to that given by the US Department of Health and Human Services, where US organizations were supplied with SNOMED CT for five years. To avoid dependence on IT organizations or departments to integrate files for use, access to the SNOMED CT browser would be ideal. This is a short-term step to get the SNOMED ball rolling in Australia. The long-term goal is to implement SNOMED CT from a terminology vendor with an application that will integrate with the emerging electronic health record.

[Health information managers] should be at the forefront of implementing SNOMED to ensure that data quality is supported and that the needs of the organization and the health information service are met.

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