

National Interim Clinical Imaging Procedure (NICIP) Code Set - Frequently Asked Questions

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1. What are the National Interim Clinical Imaging Procedure (NICIP) codes?

The NICIP code set is a comprehensive national standard set of codes and descriptions for imaging procedures and is maintained by NHS Digital, as the UK National Release Centre (UK NRC) for SNOMED CT. It is intended for use in all imaging department information systems. The current NICIP code set (DSCN 27/2009) has been mandated and remains applicable for all in-scope use cases across the NHS by the Information Standards Board for Health and Social Care (ISB). The information standard ISB 0148 can be viewed by visiting: <http://www.isb.nhs.uk/library/standard/125>.

New national governance arrangements for information standards, data collections and data extractions came into effect on 1st April 2017. On this date the Data Coordination Board (DCB) took over responsibility for the approval of standards from the Standardisation Committee for Care Information (SCCI). ISB and SCCI approved standards remain in force. More information is available at: <http://digital.nhs.uk/isce>

2. What are the benefits of having a national standard set of procedures?

Procedures in the NICIP code set are described in accordance with editorial rules so that they are unambiguous and consistently represent clinical imaging procedures across the NHS. If all systems use the same procedure code set then data quality will be improved and system interoperability will be enhanced leading to a potential reduction of patient safety issues arising from the misinterpretation of information in electronic systems.

3. What is the scope of the NICIP code set?

Currently, all conventional imaging modalities are in scope for the use of the NICIP code set. The NICIP code set provides a consistent description of imaging procedures and a standard terminology for describing aspects of clinical imaging procedures. This facilitates identification of procedures undertaken in an imaging examination along with the communication of clinical information associated with the identified procedures. The NICIP code set is intended for use in all imaging department information systems.

Administrative procedures such as ordering of external films and administrative aspects of the examinations themselves such as location, report status and visit number are deliberately excluded.

4. What is the relationship of the NICIP code set to the National Tariff Payment System?

Mappings to SNOMED CT from the NICIP code set are provided. This enables mapping to OPCS-4 codes which are the basis for the assignment to the unbundled imaging HRGs. The first release of the NICIP-OPCS-4 mapping table was in October 2009. It is highly recommended that the mapping table is subjected to local validation and assessment processes prior to use, although it has been reviewed by clinical imaging

and coding experts. Feedback from any local validation/test use is welcome and can be submitted via the Information Standards Service Desk at information.standards@nhs.net.

NHS Digital has consulted with stakeholders and compiled the evidence that the NICIP codes to OPCS-4 mapping table is being used in the production of data to inform the National Tariff Payment System data in the field of Clinical Imaging. Whilst the relevant governance bodies have approved the transition of the mapping table to supported product in principle, NHS Digital have identified some necessary improvements to the product development environment such that the stable production has the potential to be compromised. Once these tooling enhancements are in place the status will be formally updated to supported product. The 2014 consultation and subsequent investigations have led the Clinical Imaging Management Group (CIMG) to conclude that, rather than introduce more complex rules into the mapping table, the process should not be fully automated, and that imaging professionals should work closely with the clinical coding departments to ensure that the correct OPCS-4 codes are assigned according to coding national standards and local protocols.

The report of the findings following the consultation on the utility of the mapping table from NICIP codes to OPCS-4 is now available on the [consultation website](#).

The mapping table is part of the national release of the NICIP code set. It is only available from the Technology Reference data Update Distribution (TRUD) service and can be obtained electronically by registering on line via the TRUD link at the [NICIP homepage](#).

Responsibility for assigning any particular OPCS-4 code to an HRG is that of NHS Digital National Casemix Office (NCO). Their helpdesk can be contacted by email (enquiries@nhsdigital.nhs.uk) or telephone 0300 030 5678.

5. Who decides what goes in the NICIP code set and assures its fitness for purpose?

The NICIP code set is governed by the CIMG which is made up of key stakeholder representatives and has a reporting line into the Department of Health and Social Care via the National Clinical Lead for Imaging.

The CIMG is responsible for the editorial principles and meets on a regular basis to consider new requests and agree exceptions or changes to these principles. All new additions to the NICIP code set are subjected to robust quality assurance processes. Newly authored terms go through a rigorous inspection process within the UK NRC before national release.

6. Who maintains the NICIP code set?

The NICIP code set is maintained by the NHS Digital UK National Release Centre (UK NRC), based in Leeds.

7. How often is the NICIP code set updated and released?

The NICIP code set is released biannually. The release dates are the 1st of April and the 1st of October each year. Changes have been made to this products release schedule for 2019 only. More information can be found on [Delen](#).

8. How do I request a change to the NICIP code set?

Clinicians and system managers working with the PACS and RIS systems can make requests for additions to the NICIP code set. All requests must first be checked for conformance to the NICIP Editorial Principles.

Requests for changes to the NICIP code set should be made via the NHS Digital Request Submission Portal at <https://isd.hscic.gov.uk/rsp/>

9. Why is the NICIP code set mapped to SNOMED CT?

SNOMED CT is the single terminology which will be used in electronic records throughout the NHS. Where possible, existing systems will be expected to interoperate with new systems and the mapping between the NICIP code set and SNOMED CT will facilitate that.

Further information about SNOMED CT can be found by visiting:
<http://www.snomed.org/>

For SNOMED CT documentation - <https://confluence.ihtsdotools.org/display/DOC>

A diagnostic imaging procedure subset of SNOMED CT concepts has been developed based on the NICIP code set for National Programmes. This NICIP code set aids consistency in data recording and information sharing and hence improves data quality.

10. Where can I download the NICIP code set and relevant documents?

All versions of the NICIP code set, both with and without SNOMED CT maps, are only available from Technology Reference data Update Distribution (TRUD) service. They can be obtained electronically by registering on line via the TRUD link provided at the [NICIP homepage](#), along with supporting implementation guidance, editorial principles and covering letter.

11. Why is the NICIP code set referred to as interim?

As stated above, it is expected that all clinical information systems will eventually standardise on the SNOMED CT terminology and coding system – including those in imaging departments. The NICIP code set has been designed with the limitations of current systems in mind to support the rapid deployment of PACS systems in England. The mapping to SNOMED CT will also assist in the migration process from the NICIP code set.

The ‘Power of Information’¹ published in May 2012 set out the strategy for care information to deliver a range of benefits to patients and the public through better sharing of information. A key enabler for that is the proposal to base coded clinical information on a single clinical terminology of SNOMED CT®. The National Information Board endorses the move to adopt SNOMED CT to support direct management of care and has stated that the entire health system should adopt SNOMED CT by April 2020. NHS Digital have therefore consulted with NICIP stakeholders to obtain information to help develop a withdrawal plan for NICIP with a move to the use of a single terminology of SNOMED CT and to identify any outstanding issues that may need to be addressed to facilitate this. The consultation report is currently available on the [Consultation Hub](#).

12. Is it permissible for the NICIP code set to be used outside of the NHS or in countries outside the United Kingdom?

All versions of the NICIP code set, both with and without SNOMED CT maps, are only available from Technology Reference data Update Distribution (TRUD) service. They can be obtained electronically by registering on line via the TRUD link provided at the [NICIP homepage](#).

Overseas users that are not able to access the TRUD service due to licensing restrictions are advised to contact the Information Standards Service Desk for further assistance (information.standards@nhs.net).

Please note the UK NRC is not obliged to accept requests for additions and changes or address maintenance issues identified by overseas users. Where there is a requirement for change identified outside of the UK, such requests should be submitted for consideration by a government agency of the country concerned.

Any specific queries not answered within these frequently asked questions should be directed to the Information Standards Service Desk via email: information.standards@nhs.net, and clearly marked “Diagnostic Imaging.”

¹ [The Power of Information](#)