

trud: An R interface to the NHS England Technology Reference data Update Distribution (TRUD) API

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Software

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Summary

The National Health Service (NHS) England Technology Reference data Update Distribution (TRUD) (NHS England, 2024) is a comprehensive public resource that provides essential reference files underpinning electronic health record (EHR) systems. TRUD distributes clinical coding systems including ICD, Read codes, prescription codes, and the SNOMED CT ontology, with regular updates to reflect evolving clinical practice. While TRUD provides its own API access to these resources, interacting with the API directly can be complex and time-consuming for researchers working in R.

The `trud` package (Warwick et al., 2024) streamlines access to the NHS TRUD API through a convenient R interface. It provides user-friendly functions that wrap the API endpoints for retrieving metadata about available resources and downloading release items programmatically. The package includes comprehensive documentation and working examples, enabling researchers to maintain reproducible, up-to-date analyses whether for ad-hoc studies or automated pipelines.

Statement of need

NHS TRUD resources are extensively used across diverse areas of health research, from clinical epidemiology to health services research. For example, researchers use TRUD reference data for disease phenotyping, cohort selection, and developing risk prediction models. While TRUD offers API access, the complexity of direct API interaction can be a barrier to efficient research workflows.

Current approaches typically involve either manual downloads through the web interface or custom scripts to interact with the API, both of which are time-consuming and prone to version inconsistencies. The `trud` package (Warwick et al., 2024) simplifies this process by providing researchers with a straightforward R interface to the TRUD API, facilitating reproducible research and automated data pipelines.

Key features include: - Retrieval of metadata for available TRUD items and releases - Automated downloading of latest or specific versions of reference files - Simple API key management through environment variables - Comprehensive documentation and examples

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