D SNOMED CT Open Issues

This section identifies areas of SNOMED CT that need to be resolved so as to be consistent with the recommendations in this guide.

* Relating to section 3.1.2.1 Acceptable patterns for Observation code/value:
* In the January 2007 release of SNOMED CT [ <<15220000 | laboratory test ], are not subsumed by [ <<386053000 | evaluation procedure ]. However, many of them should be, so that they fall under the guidance of PATTERN ONE.
* Relating to sections 2.2.2.2.4 and 5.3: Integration of [ << 272379006 | event (event) ] Concepts:
  + Three sub-issues are identified.
    1. Clarity around the intensional/extensional definition of [ << 272379006 | event ];
    2. The appropriateness of referencing [ << 272379006 | event ] as part of vocabulary specifications;
    3. A need for integration of [ << 272379006 | event ] into the SNOMED CT Concept Model - notably with reference to the Context Model.
  + Taking each of these issues in turn:
    1. Clarity around the intensional/extensional definition of [ << 272379006 | event ]. The current definition offered in SNOMED CT documentation is '...concepts that represent occurrences (excluding procedures and interventions).' The illustrative examples offered are [ 111056004 | flood ], [ 409495001 | bioterrorist attack ] and [ 8766005 | earthquake ]. Over progressive releases this class of SNOMED CT concepts includes an increasing number of 'clinical' concepts (in particular acquiring concepts that correspond to ICD9 Chapter E, however (a) a distinction between 'occurrent' findings and events is unclear (e.g. [ 1912002 | fall ] versus [ 298344006 | elderly fall ] and both [ 84757009 | epilepsy ] (the 'state') and [ 91175000 | seizure ] being 'findings').
    2. The appropriateness of referencing [ << 272379006 | event ] Concepts as part of vocabulary specifications. In the universal specifications offered in section 5 Event accompanies findings in order to document various Observations - this satisfies the reasonable expectation to document, for example, that a 'fall' has been observed. However, one of the motivations for distinguishing 'events' from 'findings' was to prevent the use of certain event-type concepts in the creation of Observation-type record entries. It is therefore expected that, depending on the use case, [ 272379006 | event ] may be constrained out of more precise specifications.
    3. A need for integration of [ << 272379006 | event ] into the SNOMED CT Concept Model - notably with reference to the Context Model. There is insufficient space to explore this topic in detail, but contributory points include:
       - a) currently [ << 272379006 | event ] Concepts are not integrated into the SNOMED CT Context model. It is therefore not legal to 'negate' an Event, express uncertain Events or set Events as goals
       - b) Ontologically it is unclear what the distinction (in SNOMED CT) is between events and findings - the distinction may, for example, be that Findings are 'occurrent states' and Events are 'occurrent state change triggers', but if this is the case then a more comprehensive revision of content is required
       - c) if events and findings are both handled by the same 'Context model', then rightly 'Findings Context' should be renamed 'Findings and/or Event Context', but more significantly, even if suitable values are present for logically representing events, the available terms may be inadequate - Findings (as states) can comfortably be spoken of as 'present' and 'absent', but Events may require a different vocabulary (e.g. as things that 'happen' or 'do not happen').
* Relating to sections 2.2.2 and 5.3:
  + A deprecated pattern of Act.code and Observation.value is described in sections 2.2.2.2 and 5.3.1, where Observation.value is a SNOMED CT expression representing a [ << 404684003 | clinical finding (finding) ] or a [ << 413350009 | finding with explicit context ] and Act.code is represented by a code other than "ASSERTION". No machine-readable guidance can currently be provided that can satisfy the accompanying requirement that '...interpretation of the Act.code together with the Observation.value does not yield a meaning that is substantially different from the meaning implied if the Act.code was "ASSERTION"'. Such a specification may be unachievable, but objective guidance here would be regarded as very useful.