Updates and News

General Updates

The Laboratory LOINC Committee convened on December 7, 2017. Dr. Vreeman, Director of LOINC and Health Data Standards at Regenstrief, opened the meeting with an introduction and updates from the LOINC development team. LOINC continues to see steady growth and adoption. An update was given on the collaborative efforts related to CDISC and LIVD.

Upcoming LOINC and RELMA Release

As previously approved, the upcoming December release includes an expanded character size (255 characters) for several fields within the LOINC Table. The Lab Committee was also alerted to the planned removal of the field DOCUMENT_SECTION in December 2018, a change previously approved by the Clinical Committee.

Dr. Abhyankar reviewed the new content additions for the upcoming release, including 736 laboratory codes, 558 clinical codes, and 366 survey codes. Content highlights include over 300 new microbiology terms, 200 new toxicology terms, and several new panels. Additionally, the 2018 HEDIS updates are included in this release. There were approximately 4,100 terms edited, but only 500 terms had edits to primary LOINC axes.

The RELMA release includes new functionality to allow for creation and persistence of personalized subsets. These subsets can be used for easier searching by reducing the number of terms within the search. The feature is available through the users’ preferences. Currently, this list is specific to each user (e.g. not enterprise). Regenstrief is open to feedback about this feature. Additionally, the upcoming release of RELMA includes updates to allow better display resolutions for this with high definition monitors. This is a thorny problem and not all display issues have been addressed. However, the fixes put in place will allow users with high definition displays to utilize RELMA with less adjustment.

Committee Business

Committee Principles of Governance

The near final document for the LOINC Committee Principles of Governance was circulated for comment prior to the meeting and discussed during. The goal is to provide minimal, lightweight structure for the Committee. Revisions in this draft include revised language on voting guidelines and other minor clarifications. The Lab Committee discussed additional topics such as committee size and membership. The Committee unanimously approved implementing the Principles of Governance. Roll-out is expected mid-Spring, 2018.
New LOINC Artifact Versioning

LOINC has traditionally used a numeric versioning structure, but has not specified the approach and has not differentiated between major and minor updates. The proposal (distributed prior and discussed during the meeting) outlines a common two-level, software style versioning. The overall naming patterns and proposal can be obtained from the meeting website. Discussion related to whether the filenames would be dynamic or static and whether the current numbers would be maintained. The Lab Committee approved the proposal and recommended that the change be implemented in the June 2018 release.

High Sensitivity Troponin Workgroup

A workgroup was formed at the June 2017 meeting to review high sensitivity troponin assays and published guidelines, with the goal of developing a recommendation for how to model these terms in LOINC. These troponin assays have clinically significant differences in detection and cutoff limits that make them incomparable. The workgroup presented to possible solutions (available on meeting website) but each carries unique concerns. Ultimately the Committee decided to proceed with having a single set of terms for Troponin and one for Troponin-T, in order to differentiate them from conventional tests. A technical brief will be made available.

Discouraging existing \textit{pre dialysis} terms

The Regenstrief LOINC team put forward a proposal to discourage (not deprecate) the \textit{pre dialysis} chemistry set and map them to the existing general concepts. This request is driven by potential increase in number of requests for “pre-dialysis” terms. The team recommends “baseline” terms be used instead. The Committee decided to allow feedback until March 1st, 2018 and if no strong feedback is received to proceed with this in the June 2018 release.

Better/Simpler Names Discussion

With continued feedback from the community, Regenstrief has continued work to create an alternate LOINC name, primarily for display purposes. Dr. Abhyankar reviewed an Alpha version of the names and the rules used to create them. Both files were distributed for reviewed in advance of the meeting. We plan to distribute an Alpha version of these names with the June 2018 LOINC release. A file with the names and rules are posted on the meeting website and community feedback is requested.

Guide for Using LOINC Microbiology Terms

Under a contract from the FDA, Regenstrief has produced a guide written to teach users how to select LOINC terms for microbiology and infectious disease laboratory tests using best practices. The first draft was distributed to a group of stakeholders in October and is now presented for Committee and LOINC user community review. The link is posted on the meeting website and will close on the 15th for commenting. Beginning in January 2018, the guide will be piloted with four sites. Final publication will be in Spring 2018, likely in conjunction with the June release.
LOINC Groups

The LOINC Group File Alpha 2 version will be released with the upcoming December release. This artifact represents a significant change from the original release in June. Rather than one gigantic file, the Groups artifact is now separated into five individual files for ease of review. New content is included, including Group attributes (such as usage annotations) and the identification of an archetype LOINC term, where applicable. We expect to continue adding content over time. Beginning with the December 2017 release, we will persist the LG codes from release to release. Regenstrief has now constructed a community portal that allows users to submit their groups for sharing. Users can also recommend files for inclusion in the release by selecting the “recommend” button on the submitted group. The LOINC team requests continued feedback on this initiative and its usefulness to implementers.

Dr. McDonald presented recent work done by the NLM to create a rollup groups of terms for flowsheets. Many of the content groups that were created in NLM’s process have been included in the main LOINC Groups file. The Committee discussed differences in visual layout of the files (hierarchical organization) and formats needed for implementation (with group identifiers). The files developed by NLM will be posted on the meeting website for community review and feedback.

Updates from the LOINC Community

Seven community updates were given. The presentations included: CIMI, HSPC (Stan Huff); CAP (Ray Aller); CDC/APHL/HIV Team (Riki Merrick); Mayo Clinic (Joseph Yao); FDA (Mike Waters); 3M (Pam Banning); and Canada Health Infoway (Lorie Carey).