

# ENCODING AND TRANSMITTING DATA

Robert Simpson, IBMS representative on the Royal College of Pathologists Informatics Group, with the latest developments on sharing pathology data.

**N**HS Digital recently held a workshop with the title “Enabling the sharing of pathology results across the NHS”. The major theme of the meeting was to explore how the now static pathology messaging system, which is based on the Pathology Bounded Code List (PBCL), could be replaced with coding and messaging standards and systems to enable pathology data and information sharing across NHS in England.

The aim would be that diagnostic messages and information – for example, a request, a numeric result, an interpretive comment, or a written report – are encoded, transmitted, received and displayed accurately, securely and in a timely manner.

NHS Digital is the national information and technology partner to the health and care system and works closely with similar bodies in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. NHS Digital has been given the job of developing new standards to replace the PBCL and PMIP-EDIFACT and to provide enhancements, which provide greater utility and integration with other NHS electronic data and

record systems, such as electronic patient records, public health monitoring, or commissioning and monitoring of service provision.

The NHS Digital workshop, which took place in Birmingham, was convened to bring together stakeholders in the diagnostics – particularly pathology – disciplines to hear about NHS Digital’s plans for developments in pathology data capture and messaging.

The IBMS and other professional bodies, including The Royal College of Pathologists and Faculty of Clinical Informatics, together with biomedical scientists from pathology IT departments and IT specialists, industry partners from IT and Laboratory Information System

providers and NHS Digital informatics specialists, discussed the work completed so far.

They also covered the opportunities new systems offer and the challenges of designing and building the replacement systems, implementing them and transferring results and information from old systems, which will be made redundant.

The meeting received confirmation that the use of SNOMED CT as a terminology is endorsed by the NHS National Data Board and that for the message transfer system Fast Healthcare Interoperability Resources (FHIR) is the preferred option. The NHS Digital National Pathology and Diagnostics team described how they are collaboratively developing a data model, a message specification, a SNOMED CT-based NHS-specific catalogue known as the unified test list (pilot projects have already mapped some 350 test names) and a units of measure standard. **IBMS**

*The major theme of the meeting was how the pathology messaging system could be replaced*

**To find out more** about this project and how to get involved, visit [hscic.kahootz.com/connect.ti/PathologyandDiagnostics](https://hscic.kahootz.com/connect.ti/PathologyandDiagnostics)  
NHS Digital will be hosting a free exhibition hall seminar at IBMS Congress this year.