The use of ICPC in Portugal – status update 2018

Daniel Pinto (WICC Member)
Family Medicine Unit - Nova Medical School, Lisbon
daniel.pinto@nms.unl.pt

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ICPC-2 is the official classification for primary care in the Portuguese National Health Service. All family doctors within the National Health Service (NHS) have access to an EHR that uses ICPC to classify reasons for encounter, problems and process. EHRs must use ICPC coding to be authorized for use in primary care within the NHS. Hospital referrals are also classified with ICPC. Private practices and insurance companies (outside the NHS) may not use ICPC, but represent a small (yet growing) fraction of primary care in Portugal, albeit the largest software vendor includes ICPC in its software for private practices. ICPC is used by the Ministry of Health to monitor productivity in primary care and measure quality and performance indicators.

ICPC is being studied in the context of funding of the NHS, with the Ministry of Health seeking its integration with morbidity measurement systems like Clinical Risk Groups (CRGs). This idea has been put forward more than five years ago, but has not been put into practice. It is now doubtful if it ever will.

The Portuguese Ministry of Health joined IHTSDO in January 2014. Some small projects are underway to implement SNOMED-CT in specific settings, but general use is not anticipated in the near future. The only current known application in primary care clinical practice is the Portuguese Allergy Catalog, which uses ICPC rubrics A87 and A92 to trigger the allergy and adverse drug reactions screen in the Ministry of Health's software. The primary care refset resulting from the collaboration between WICC and IHTSDO has been made available to Portuguese users. There are currently no plans to translate the primary care refset into Portuguese.

Training on ICPC continues to be scant and there is no organized plan from either the Ministry of Health or the Portuguese Association of General and Family Medicine (the WONCA license holder for Portugal). Training standardization and reaching all family physicians are two key issues that have not been adequately solved.

There have been no further updates to the Portuguese translation after version ICPC-2e v4.4. A translation of the new process information in rubrics has been made by a group of residents but has not been validated and was not yet integrated in the official translation.

The current version of the Portuguese translation is no longer available on the Ministry of Health's Central Administration website, as it has been remodeled and the old URL is not working. It can be provided by me upon request.