



National Information Structure – the steps before ICT

A foundation for access to appropriate information in health services

National Information Structure

– a vital part of the Swedish Strategy for eHealth.

The steps before ICT

Information must be considered as a common and strategic resource to be used by many different parties: health and medical care professionals, management, researchers and patients. Therefore, the information has to be relevant, described in a uniform way and well structured. Health care and social services documentation has to be appropriate.

To achieve efficient information supply in health care and social services, coordinated national efforts are needed. These needs formed the basis of the National Strategy for eHealth launched in 2006.

The National Board of Health and Welfare has been commissioned by the Swedish government to define the basis for **appropriate documentation**. The commission could be described as “the steps before ICT”.

The National Board coordinates this long-term effort in two projects: National Information Structure (2007-2009) and *National project for an interdisciplinary terminology* (2007-March 2011).

The result will form the foundation for business development in healthcare and for procurement of ICT that makes information available in an efficient and reliable way.

Documentation should be appropriate

In health care and social services, vast amounts of information concerning patients and clients are documented in different ICT systems. Documentation is not always done in a uniform way, nor is it always based on accepted and common rules about what should be documented. This means that information is not always available, searchable or relevant for those who need it.

ICT systems are essential for making information available in a safe and efficient way and for managing communication. However, defining what kind of information ICT systems should manage is a task that needs to be done by those who represent the different information needs - individuals and organisations within health care and social services.

A **common information structure** as a foundation for documentation provides the basic prerequisites needed to ensure that relevant information accompanies the individual throughout the care process. Irrespective of where information is registered or stored, it must be available and possible to interpret when and where it is needed. A common information structure also enables process analysis at individual as well as aggregated levels.

Health care business analysis

What are the goals of health care and social services?
What are the strategic foundations, such as laws and regulations and business values? What processes are needed to reach the goals in healthcare? What do different actors need to communicate? What kind of information is necessary for effective communication?

An overall **business analysis of health care and social services activities** is necessary to enable development of health care processes and efficient ICT systems. This analysis is performed in the National Information Structure project.

On the basis of this analysis, the information needed for **appropriate documentation** is defined and described. The main focus is information that is needed by different parties – information that has to accompany each individual within the health care and social services processes, and that is needed by different stakeholders for planning, decision making, analysis, quality improvement, research, as well as making informed and active choices.

The results – a foundation for healthcare improvement and ICT development

The healthcare business analysis will result in a description of a national information structure for healthcare and social services. This will provide the prerequisites for health care and social services organisations to develop individually based and appropriate documentation. The information structure contributes to an efficient information supply.

The national information structure includes three generic and interrelated models: **process, concept and information models**. A description of the strategic foundations, such as business goals, national regulations and core business values, is also a part of the information structure.

The information structure can be used as the basis for a regulatory framework specifying the content, form and structure of information.

The project will deliver its final results by the end of 2009. During the project, drafts of the models are published to facilitate a dialogue and to gain approval from the stakeholders.

Effects on individuals and organisations

A national information structure and correct health care and social services documentation will enable:

- a better basis for making decisions about the health of individuals
- collaboration across organisational boundaries
- a focus on the needs of the individual
- quality improvement, increased patient safety and patient influence
- a better basis for analysis, quality comparisons and research
- a more efficient use of resources

More information

National Information Structure

www.socialstyrelsen.se/NI

National project for interdisciplinary terminology

www.socialstyrelsen.se/SNOMEDCT

National Strategy for eHealth

www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/2028/a/64324

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