

The WHO Updating & Revision Committee

Maintaining the currency of a health classification is an enormous but necessary task. Credible health classifications must:

- provide a common language for clinicians and administrators
- be receptive to new disease processes, and
- accommodate emerging evidence of aetiologies of known diseases, new technologies and surgical procedures.

The World Health Organization (WHO) Updating & Revision Committee (URC) recommends mortality and morbidity changes to the *International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems, Tenth Revision* (ICD-10) to the Heads of WHO Collaborating Centres for the Family of International Classifications each year. The URC also develops policies to manage the update process.

The URC was established in March 2000 under the name of Update Reference Committee. The National Centre for Classification in Health (NCCCH), Sydney, Australia was the Chair/Secretariat for the URC and their contribution was outstanding. Since October 2004 the Chair/Secretariat has passed to the Canadian Institute for Health Information, Member of the North American Collaborating Centre

Background to the ICD-10 update process

The ICD-10 in its hard copy version was published by WHO in 1992 (Tabular list), 1993 (Instruction manual) and 1994 (Alphabetical index). It resulted from work begun in 1983 that culminated in the International Conference for the Tenth Revision of the ICD in 1989.

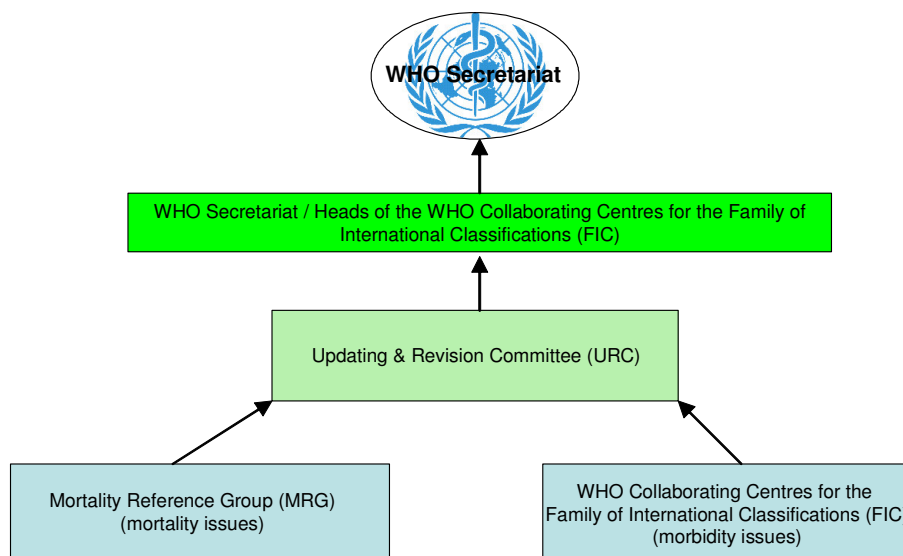
Prior to ICD-10, updates were not made between revisions. In its report the WHO ICD-10 International Conference (1989) ¹ recommended that "... WHO should endorse the concept of an updating process between revisions and give consideration as to how an effective updating mechanism could be put in place". Mechanisms for updating ICD-10 were established in 1997 and became operational in 1999.

Two separate bodies were established to manage the updating process: the Mortality Reference Group (MRG) and the URC. The concept for the MRG was developed in 1997, and it began making decisions regarding the application and interpretation of ICD to mortality in 1998. The MRG also makes recommendations on proposed ICD updates to the URC. The URC receives proposals from the MRG and members through the WHO Collaborating Centres for the Family of International Classifications. The URC considers the proposals and submits recommendations on proposed ICD updates for mortality and morbidity to the Heads of Collaborating Centres.

The Heads of Collaborating Centres have agreed that the function of the URC should reinforce the process of updating ICD-10 and creating the foundation of an ICD-11. The relationship between the MRG, URC, WHO Collaborating Centres, Heads of WHO Collaborating Centres and the WHO Secretariat is shown in Figure 1.

¹ WHO ICD-10 Volume 1, p.27 (1989)

Figure 1: Relationship between the MRG, URC, WHO Collaborating Centres, Heads of WHO Collaborating Centres and the WHO Secretariat



URC Structure

Meetings

All work of the URC is conducted by e-mail with one face-to-face meeting each year at the Heads of Collaborating Centres meeting and three telephone conferences.

Terms of reference

1. Determine policy on updating of ICD-10 (frequency, tabular, index, rules).
2. Establish criteria for updates to ICD-10.
3. Review and comment on ICD-10 update proposals from Mortality Reference Group, Collaborating Centres and the secretariat.
4. Submit recommendations for ICD-10 updates for ratification by Centre Heads meeting.
5. Evaluate update mechanism (structure, process, outcome).

URC Policies

Minor change

Includes:

- Correction or clarification of existing index entry that only changes the code assignment to a code within the same three-character category.
- Enhancements to the tabular list or index (such as the addition of an inclusion term to an existing code; the addition of an exclusion note; the duplication of an existing index entry under another main term).
- Change to a code description that enhances the description rather than changes the concept.
- Change to a rule or guideline that does not affect the integrity of morbidity or mortality data collections.
- Correction of a typographical error.

Major change

Includes:

- Addition of new code.
- Deletion of code.
- Movement of a code to another category or chapter.
- Change to an existing index entry that changes the code assignment from one three-character category to another three-character category (movement of terms).
- Change to a rule or guideline that affects the integrity of morbidity or mortality data collections.
- Introduction of a new term into the index.

Update cycle

Tabular list: Every three years for major changes, annually for minor changes

Index: Annually for changes that do not impact on the structure of the tabular list.

Updates to ICD-10

[Minor](#) ICD-10 updates accepted each October at the annual Network meeting are posted the following year to the [WHO](#) website before implementation in January of the year following posting.

[Major](#) ICD-10 updates accepted each October at the Heads of Centres meeting are posted the following year to the [WHO](#) before implementation in January of the year designated as major.

Year of decision at HoC meeting	Minor/ Major	Publication on WHO website	Official implementation date	ICD-10 Version
1997	Minor Major	January 1998 January 1998	January 1999 January 2000	ICD-10 (1999) ICD-10 (2000)
1998	Major*	January 1999	January 2000	ICD-10 (2000)
1999	Minor Major	January 2000 January 2000	January 2001 January 2003	ICD-10 (2001) ICD-10 (2003)
2000	Minor Major	January 2001 January 2001	January 2002 January 2003	ICD-10 (2002) ICD-10 (2003)
2001	Major*	January 2002	January 2003	ICD-10 (2003)
2002	Minor Major	January 2003 January 2003	January 2004 January 2006	ICD-10 (2004) ICD-10 (2006)
2003	Minor Major	January 2004 January 2004	January 2005 January 2006	ICD-10 (2005) ICD-10 (2006)
2004	Major*	January 2005	January 2006	ICD-10 (2006)

Year of decision at HoC meeting	Minor/ Major	Publication on WHO website	Official implementation date	ICD-10 Version
2005	Minor Major	January 2006 January 2006	January 2007 January 2009	ICD-10 (2007) ICD-10 (2009)
2006	Minor Major	January 2007 January 2007	January 2008 January 2009	ICD-10 (2008) ICD-10 (2009)
2007	Major*	January 2008	January 2009	ICD-10 (2009)

**Note: Major years are inclusive of minor changes.*

Version control

The year of implementation is added to all versions of ICD-10. For example, the version of ICD-10 implemented in January 1999 will be labelled ICD-10 (1999).

URC work program

1. URC members submit proposed ICD-10 updates to the URC secretariat between:
 - **1 February to 31 March** from the Heads of WHO Collaborating Centres
 - **1 March to 30 April** from the Mortality Reference Group.
2. URC secretariat collates and distributes proposed ICD-10 updates to members of the URC **by the end of April** .
3. URC members submit comments about the proposed ICD-10 updates to the URC secretariat **by the end of May** , taking into account:
 - the feasibility and desirability of accepting the change
 - the impact of the change upon data quality and comparability, education, specificity of documentation, needs for definitions, etc.
4. URC secretariat collates comments from members of the URC and makes recommendations for ICD-10 updates based on those comments. Recirculated for comment **by the end of June** .
5. URC members submit comments about draft ICD-10 updates to the URC secretariat **by the end of July**.
6. URC secretariat submits final recommendations for ICD-10 updates to WHO **by the end of July** for distribution to Heads of Centres.
7. URC recommendations for ICD-10 updates are ratified at WHO Heads of Centres meeting **in October** .
8. WHO disseminates the official ICD-10 updates through Collaborating Centres, national organisations and the [WHO](#) website **by the end of January** .

Submission guidelines for updates to ICD-10

These guidelines provide guidance for members of the WHO Collaborating Centres for the Family of International Classifications and the WHO Mortality Reference Group to make submissions to the URC for corrections, amendments and updates to ICD-10.

What to consider when preparing a submission

Reasons for submissions:

1. Need to identify a new disease
2. Need to reflect a change in clinical knowledge
3. Need to reflect a change in clinical terminology
4. Need for compatibility within the WHO Family of Classifications
5. Need for change in rules, guidelines or conventions
6. Need to improve clarity or reduce ambiguity in the tabular list
7. Need to create, delete or correct an index entry
8. Need for greater or less specificity
9. Need to correct typographical errors.

When developing a submission, consider:

1. Is the problem a result of data collection methods?
2. Does the recommended update relate to a unique situation?
3. Will the update or new code compromise the purpose and structure of ICD-10?
That is, does the recommendation follow existing ICD-10 codes and conventions and relate to a disease, an injury, a related health problem, an external cause, a drug or chemical?
4. Does the recommendation overlap with any existing codes in the classification?
5. Is definition required to ensure correct usage of the update or new code?
6. Does the recommendation apply to morbidity and mortality applications?

How to proceed with a submission

After considering the [criteria for update of ICD-10](#) , use the [WHO URC submission form](#) to make update suggestions to ICD-10. All supporting and relevant documentation should be attached. Full contact details should also be provided.

Address for submission

Please send recommendations for updates to ICD-10 to the [Head of WHO Collaborating Centre for the Family of International Classifications](#) for your region, who will send recommendations to the URC.

What happens to submissions?

The URC secretariat (CIHI, Canada) collates and distributes recommendations to URC members for analysis (using established criteria for change) and comment about the feasibility or desirability of acceptance of the proposed changes. The URC recommendations are sent to the Heads of WHO Collaborating Centres by 31 July annually and presented at the Heads of Centres meeting in October of the same year.

If approved, the change will be posted on this webpage with the proposed implementation date. The NCCH webpage is linked to the [WHO](#) website, and WHO is responsible for disseminating the changes to its Collaborating Centres, Regional Offices and other relevant organisations.

WHO has undertaken to provide a hard copy of the addendum to ICD-10 at three-yearly intervals, which reflect the changes up to, and including the year of the last Major change. For example, a hard copy will be produced in 2002 of all changes up to and including those decided in 2001. This hard copy will be distributed in time for the official implementation date of January 2003.

URC Submission Form

[Click here to view the Form](#) (PDF File 21kb)

URC Forum

The URC Forum is an e-mail discussion group for members of the WHO URC and nominated representatives from other Collaborating Centres.

Objectives of the URC Forum

There are two objectives of the discussion group:

1. To provide a forum for discussion of ***morbidity*** coding and classification issues for members of the URC and other Collaborating Centre nominated representatives.
2. To provide a forum for discussion of URC work items between URC members with the aim of streamlining the URC process.

Another e-mail discussion group, [the Mortality Forum](#) , has been established to discuss mortality coding and classification issues. To send a query to the Mortality Forum, address e-mail to: mortforum@nordclass.uu.se.

Past discussions in the Mortality Forum are posted to the Nordic Collaborating Centre's web site for the Mortality Forum http://www.nordclass.uu.se/index_e.htm.

Management of the URC Forum

The URC Secretariat manages the URC Forum. The secretariat moderates the URC business on the forum but does not moderate general morbidity coding queries.

To seek nomination to subscribe to the URC Forum, please contact your [Head of WHO Collaborating Centre for the Family of International Classifications](#) .