

Introduction to the Australian Medicines Terminology (AMT)

About this Quick Reference Guide

This Quick Reference Guide (QRG) summarises the key concepts, tables and reference information from the Introduction to the Australian Medicines Terminology (AMT) course.

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Key terms

The course introduces three terms that appear throughout. In healthcare they have specific meanings:

Term	Definition
Concept	A single unit of clinical meaning (an idea) such as a medicine, a condition or a procedure. Each concept has a unique, permanent code and one or more terms that describe it, allowing people and systems to represent and share the same meaning consistently.
Terminology	A structured collection of standardised concepts, each identified by a code, along with their descriptions (terms) and the relationships that connect them. This ensures clinical meaning is shared consistently, even when different descriptions are used.
Interoperability	The ability to share information easily between people, organisations and systems, with the same meaning understood by everyone involved. It enables a connected healthcare system where information is shared securely and safely, with minimal effort from people and organisations.

Topic: Why terminology matters for medicines

The issue with medicine names

Take paracetamol. Depending on the system and the setting, the same medicine might be recorded as any of the following:

- paracetamol 48 mg/1 mL oral liquid
- Panadol
- Children's Panadol 200 mL
- Paracetamol
- Dymadon

Without a standardised medicine terminology there is no automatic way to confirm a dispensed product corresponds to the original prescription. For patients, clinicians and systems alike, this gap introduces real risk.

One medicine, many names

AMT addresses this by assigning a unique code to each medicine concept it covers, regardless of which name appears at the point of care. Whether a clinician selects a generic name, a brand name or a specific strength, the underlying AMT code is recorded automatically. When another system receives that code, it knows exactly which medicine is being exchanged.

Key message: Many names. One meaning. One code.

Where AMT fits in clinical terminology

Consistent clinical terminology matters for three reasons: patient safety, interoperability and data quality. But medicines present a specific naming challenge that general clinical terminology alone does not address. AMT closes that gap, providing a structured set of codes for registered and prescribed medicines in Australia, from the active ingredient through to the exact branded product in its packaging.

Topic takeaway: Medicines are known by many different names across systems and settings. Standardised terminology solves this by assigning each medicine a single, consistent code that all systems can reliably recognise and exchange, preventing confusion and supporting patient safety.

Topic: What is AMT?

AMT, the Australian Medicines Terminology, is Australia's national standard for describing medicines in digital health systems. It provides a consistent set of codes and terms for registered and prescribed medicines in Australia: from the active ingredient at the most general level, through to the specific branded product in its specific container as dispensed or administered.

AMT is part of SNOMED CT-AU, Australia's key national clinical terminology system. It is managed by the Australian Digital Health Agency and operated by the CSIRO's Australian e-Health Research Centre (AEHRC) as the National Clinical Terminology Service (NCTS). The NCTS acts as Australia's National Release Centre for SNOMED International. Content is released monthly.

AMT is not a prescribing guideline or a drug information resource. It does not tell clinicians what to prescribe or how to dose. It provides the consistent language that systems need to record, exchange and understand medicine information.

What AMT contains

AMT covers in-scope registered and prescribed medicines for supply in Australia. Across its concept types it represents key information including:

- The active ingredient(s) and their strength
- The dose form (for example, tablet, oral liquid, injection)
- The brand name (for branded products)
- The pack size and container type

AMT in the broader standards landscape

AMT does not work in isolation. It is part of a broader set of digital health standards that together support safe and connected care in Australia. AMT provides the consistent, structured terminology for medicines. Standards such as HL7 FHIR provide the frameworks for structuring and exchanging that information between systems. Together, they enable systems to share medicine information that is both technically transferable and clinically meaningful.

Topic takeaway: AMT is Australia's standardised medicine terminology for registered and prescribed medicines, supporting clinical systems to identify and record medicines consistently across care settings.

Topic: AMT concepts

AMT versions (v3 to v4)

AMT has evolved over time. The current model is AMT version 4 (v4), which is what this course covers. Older v3 terms such as 'Medicinal Product Unit of Use' (MPUU) or 'Trade Product Unit of Use' (TPUU) are still in circulation and existing documentation. AMT v4 uses a revised set of concept classes that better align with international SNOMED CT standards.

Comparison of v3 and v4 concept types:

AMT Version 3 concept type	AMT Version 4 concept type	Details provided by concept type
Medicinal Product (MP)	Medicinal Product (MP)	Active ingredient
Medicinal Product Unit of Use (MPUU)	Clinical Drug (CD)	Active ingredient, strength, dose form
Medicinal Product Pack (MPP)	Clinical Drug Package (CDP)	Active ingredient, strength, dose form, pack size
Trade Product (TP)	Product Name (PN)	Brand
Trade Product Unit of Use (TPUU)	Branded Clinical Drug (BCD)	Brand, strength, dose form
Trade Product Pack (TPP)	Branded Clinical Drug Package (BCDP)	Brand, strength, dose form, pack size
Containerised Trade Product Pack (CTPP)	Containerised Branded Clinical Drug Package (CBCDP)	Brand, strength, dose form, pack size, container

Key message: Version 4 represented a shift to align with the international medications and substances standard to improve integration between Australia and the global health community. The old v3 names may still be in use even after upgrading to v4, for continuity, backward compatibility, or integration with existing systems.

Follow a medicine through the AMT concept types

AMT organises medicines from the most general to the most specific. The worked example follows paracetamol oral liquid, prescribed for a 12-year-old patient with swallowing difficulties, through all seven concept types:

Concept type	What it represents	Worked example
Medicinal Product (MP)	The most general level. Identifies the active ingredient only: no strength, no form, no brand.	Paracetamol
Clinical Drug (CD)	A generic medicine with active ingredient, strength and dose form.	Paracetamol 48 mg/mL oral liquid
Clinical Drug Package (CDP)	A generic medicine pack — the clinical drug in a specific pack size.	Paracetamol 48 mg/mL oral liquid, 200 mL
Product Name (PN)	The product brand name only. Not yet associated with a specific strength, form or pack.	Panadol
Branded Clinical Drug (BCD)	A branded version of a clinical drug — brand name combined with strength and dose form.	Panadol Children's 5 to 12 Years Colour Free Orange 48 mg/mL oral liquid
Branded Clinical Drug Package (BCDP)	A branded medicine pack — a branded clinical drug in a specific pack size.	Panadol Children's 5 to 12 Years Colour Free Orange 48 mg/mL oral liquid, 200 mL
Containerised Branded Clinical Drug Package (CBCDP)	The most specific level. The exact branded product supplied for patient use in its specific container, as dispensed.	Panadol Children's 5 to 12 Years Colour Free Orange 48 mg/mL oral liquid, 200 mL, bottle

The seven concept types are connected. Each more specific level is a kind of the level above it, in SNOMED CT this is called an “is a” relationship. This structural connection lets systems trace from a dispensed product back to its active ingredient, which is what makes allergy checking, drug interaction screening and medicine matching work reliably across settings.

Topic takeaway: AMT organises medicines into a structured set of concept types, connected by “is a” relationships, from the active ingredient through to the exact branded product in its container.

Topic: AMT across the medicines management lifecycle

AMT supports consistent medicine identification at every stage of the medicines management lifecycle:

Stage	How AMT supports it
Prescribing	The clinical system records the medicine using an AMT code. Whether a clinician enters a generic or brand name, the selection is recorded against a consistent AMT code, supporting clinical decision support, allergy checking and safe prescribing.
Dispensing	AMT enables the system to link the prescription to the exact product being supplied. This supports checking that the dispensed product matches what was prescribed and supports medicine reconciliation across care settings.
Administration	The clinical system records the medicine using AMT concepts, ensuring it is captured consistently. Records linked to AMT concepts can be compared across settings and over time, supporting safer care and accurate medicine histories.
Exchange of information	AMT provides the common language so that medicine information shared between systems is understood correctly. Whether in a discharge summary, a referral or a pharmacy medicines list, AMT codes let receiving systems interpret the medicine in the same way.

AMT in the patient journey

At every point in a patient's journey, AMT is used in the background — clinicians select medicines using familiar names without ever entering codes:

Point in journey	Role of AMT
On admission	Medicine reconciliation uses AMT codes to match the patient's current medicines against what is recorded in their history.
During prescribing	The prescribing clinician selects the medicine; the system records it using an AMT concept.
At dispensing	The pharmacy system verifies the prescription against the AMT concept, linking it to the product being supplied.
During administration	The ward record documents the administered dose using the AMT concept, ensuring consistent information across care settings.
On discharge	The discharge summary includes the AMT concept that receiving systems (for example, the patient's GP and community pharmacist) can interpret consistently.

Why exchange of information matters

Because every medicine is described using standardised codes, a system receiving medicines information does not need to infer meaning. The clinical meaning is preserved, regardless of which system sent it or which system received it. This is what interoperability means in practice for medicines: not just that data can be transmitted, but that the meaning of that data is retained.

Key message: AMT does not transfer data between systems, that is the role of technical standards like HL7 FHIR. What AMT provides is the consistent language that makes transferred data meaningful.

Topic takeaway: AMT supports the medicines management lifecycle by giving clinical systems a consistent way to identify medicines through prescribing, dispensing, administration and the exchange of information between care settings.

Quick Reference Topic Summary

Key takeaways from each topic of the course.

Topic	Key takeaway
Why terminology matters for medicines	AMT is Australia's standardised medicine terminology for registered and prescribed medicines, supporting clinical systems to identify and record medicines consistently across care settings.
What is AMT?	AMT is Australia's standardised medicine terminology for registered and prescribed medicines, supporting clinical systems to identify and record medicines consistently across care settings.
AMT concepts	AMT organises medicines into a structured set of concept types, connected by "is a" relationships, from the active ingredient through to the exact branded product in its container.
AMT across the medicines management lifecycle	AMT supports the medicines management lifecycle by giving clinical systems a consistent way to identify medicines through prescribing, dispensing, administration and the exchange of information between care settings.