VOCABULARIES IN MEDICINE AND NURSING

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The fast growing amount of publications and the increasing availability of electronic publications and databases render the need of controlled vocabularies in medicine and nursing more urgent than ever. Already for a long time, the vast load of information has been evaluated and organized by means of thesauri and other controlled vocabularies, but the electronic era has brought about new problems related to these processes, e.g. the digitalization of already existing vocabularies, collaboration in the integrating of different vocabularies, quality assurance etc.

In the first part of this paper I will discuss the need of controlled vocabularies in indexing and searching, with emphasis on electronic services.

In the second part I will deal with existing vocabularies in medicine and nursing (including Medical Subject Headings, EMTREE Thesaurus and Read Code) and their applicability in the electronic environment.

The third part is dedicated to the Universal Medical Language System, which represents collaborative approach towards solving terminological problems arising from different vocabularies.

I will conclude the paper with a short overview of the Finnish situation concerning vocabularies in medicine and nursing.