MeSH-PL: THE POLISH VERSION OF MeSH in Progress

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Implementation of integrated library systems in Polish medical libraries and launching the Polish National Union Catalogue (NUKat) prompted us to join forces on the MeSH translation and creation of a standard unified indexing tool which would serve as a part of a mechanism enabling the records exchange and helping medical staff and patients in the process of gaining the „information literacy".

In 2001, when the community of librarians approved a unified concept for the Polish electronic version of MeSH, an agreement was signed and the disparate data resources of the three leading centres were integrated into one electronic browser MeSH-PL. It was not until the English-Polish MeSH browser was located on an Internet platform completely independent from any library system, when it became possible to perform all these changes. Since then the MeSH records have existed in several formats and could be imported to various library systems.

Joint work on the unified Polish version of MeSH were launched in November 2002. The MeSH-PL team decided to translate successively the entire MeSH trees. In this way 61 subcategories (with two-digit numbers) were enriched by providing Polish terminology. MeSH-PL is actualised yearly in accordance with the original MeSH. A mirror web page in Polish has been created by addition of the main headings and entry terms (descriptors and ascriptors) to the original NLM record.

To obtain as many Polish terms as it is possible, we have to review thoroughly all Polish medical literature available because the actual Polish medical lexicons and encyclopedia are lacking. As the work proceeded, it could be noticed that there was a need to put more and more information form the original MeSH in the Polish mirror. Until now the following fields have been represented: MeSH Heading, Tree Number, Entry Term, See Also, Pharm. Action, CAS type 1 name, Registry Number, Allowable Qualifiers, Entry Combination, Unique ID, MeSH Tree Structures.

Annotations and Scope Notes have not been translated yet. We decided to supply the Polish user with Latin terminology, which is widely used in Polish medical language. A separate field was created to put the Latin terms there. Last year we prepared and published a first on-line Polish manual on the use of MeSH tags for cataloguers. Polish medical libraries are in urgent need of trainings on the unification of cataloguing the medical literature with the use of MeSH terms. From the beginning of collaboration, the Jagiellonian University Medical Library organized four two-day workshops for participants from all Polish medical libraries.

A milestone was the implementation of MeSH as a controlled vocabulary in the Polish National Catalogue (NuKat). Till now, three large medical libraries started co-cataloguing their resources.
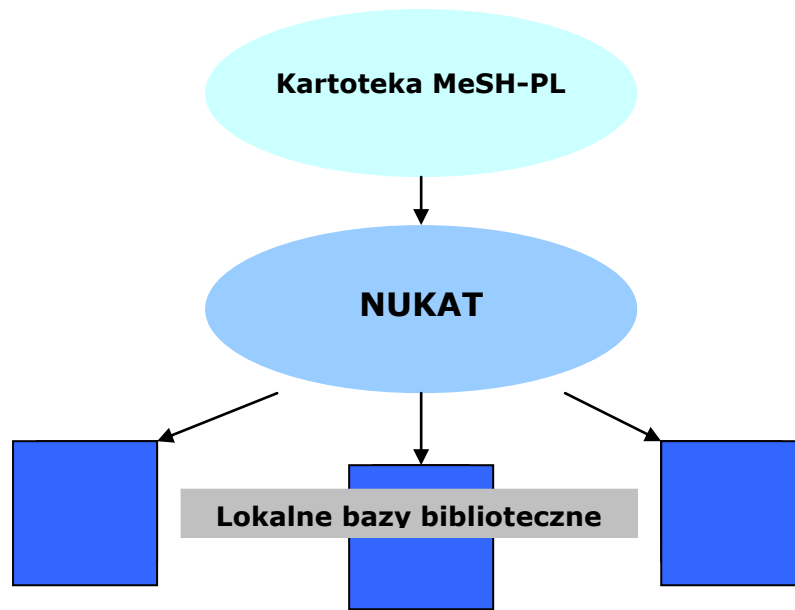
Fig. The way of MeSH authority headings after a library joined the National Catalogue.

At present, the collaboration is financed by the home institutions and does not receive any funds. In the future, we would like to create a consortium, which would be financed independently. Then we will be able to build a team of specialists, experts in particular subjects and implement the MeSH-PL database in various scientific information products. But the primary aim is still to deliver a high quality tool that will improve medical knowledge management and to promote it in patient-oriented resources.