

CAPS - CODING ATLAS FOR PHARMACEUTICAL SUBSTANCES

CAPS is a pharmaceutical classification system devised by the former Family Medicine Research Centre and used in the Centre's general practice research since the 1980s. Its structure has been developed and expanded over the years to allow identification of all products currently used in Australian general practice.

CAPS is now in constant use by the Classifications Node within the School of Health Sciences to code medication data and is therefore updated every two months to include all new drugs prescribed, supplied or recommended (over the counter) by general practitioners. Any changes to code or label are linked to the old code or label so that no data are lost in analysis. These changes are documented in an Excel spreadsheet, which is included in the quarterly release of data to clients.

CAPS is mapped at the generic level to the Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical ([ATC](#)) classification index of the World Health Organization. Each generic code is mapped to the corresponding ATC fifth level code, and all brand names from the one generic are mapped to the same ATC code. This allows data to be analysed using either the international ATC classification of non-proprietary medications or the CAPS classification system, or both.

It is a hierarchical system divided into drug groups and sub-groups based on anatomical site and therapeutic utility. The CAPS database contains over 11,500 alphanumeric codes, each of which can be accessed for analytical purposes at any of six levels: group, sub-group, generic (composition of drug), proprietary brand name, product, form, or brand identifier (used when one manufacturer has more than one brand of the generic).

For example: *Flucloxacillin Liquid 125 mg 5 ml* = A10800103113:

Generic	Company Code	Product	Brand	Drug form
A108	001	03	1	13

Every pharmaceutical product in use in Australian general practice has a separate record in the CAPS database. Each record also contains extra fields that add information on strength, measure, quantity and volume. This enables a daily dose to be calculated.

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ATC - ANATOMICAL THERAPEUTIC CHEMICAL - INTRODUCTION

ATC drug classification

Title: The Anatomical, Therapeutic, Chemical (ATC) classification system with Defined Daily Doses (DDDs), short: The ATC/DDD system.

Introduction

Since 1982, the Anatomical Therapeutic Chemical (ATC) classification system has been maintained by the WHO Collaborating Centre for Drug Statistics Methodology in Oslo, Norway. The system provides a global standard for classifying medical substances and serves as a tool for drug utilisation research. The WHO recommends the ATC system for international comparisons. In the WHO framework it is also used for reporting of adverse drug reactions. ATC codes are included both in international and national drug catalogues (including Australia) and represent a common language. Courses in the ATC/DDD methodology are arranged annually by the Oslo Centre, with participants from all over the world. Researchers, representatives from health authorities and the pharmaceutical industry attend these courses.

In 2004 ATC was accepted into the Australian Family of Health and Related Classifications for use in classifying drugs.