

RxNav - A Semantic Navigation Tool for Clinical Drugs

Written by Dr. Hazem El-Oraby

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RxNorm is one of a suite of designated standards for use in U.S. Federal Government systems for the electronic exchange of clinical health information. RxNorm provides standard names for clinical drugs (active ingredient + strength + dose form) and for dose forms as administered to a patient. It provides links from clinical drugs, both branded and generic, to their active ingredients, drug components (active ingredient + strength), and related brand names. NDCs (National Drug Codes) for specific drug products (where there are often many NDC codes for a single product) are linked to that product in RxNorm. RxNorm links its names to many of the drug vocabularies commonly used in pharmacy management and drug interaction software, including those of First Databank, Micromedex, MediSpan, Gold Standard Alchemy, and Multum. By providing links between these vocabularies, RxNorm can mediate messages between systems not using the same software and vocabulary.

RxNorm, a standardized nomenclature for clinical drugs, is produced by the National Library of Medicine (NLM). In this context, a *clinical drug* is a pharmaceutical product given to (or taken by) a patient with a therapeutic or diagnostic intent. In RxNorm, the name of a clinical drug combines its ingredients, strengths, and form.

While ingredient and strength have straightforward meanings, clarification of what is meant by *form*

is in order. In RxNorm, the form is the physical form in which the drug is administered or is specified to be administered in a prescription or order. The RxNorm clinical drug name does not refer to the size of the package, the form in which the product was manufactured, its form when it arrived at the dispensary, or the route of administration of the drug..

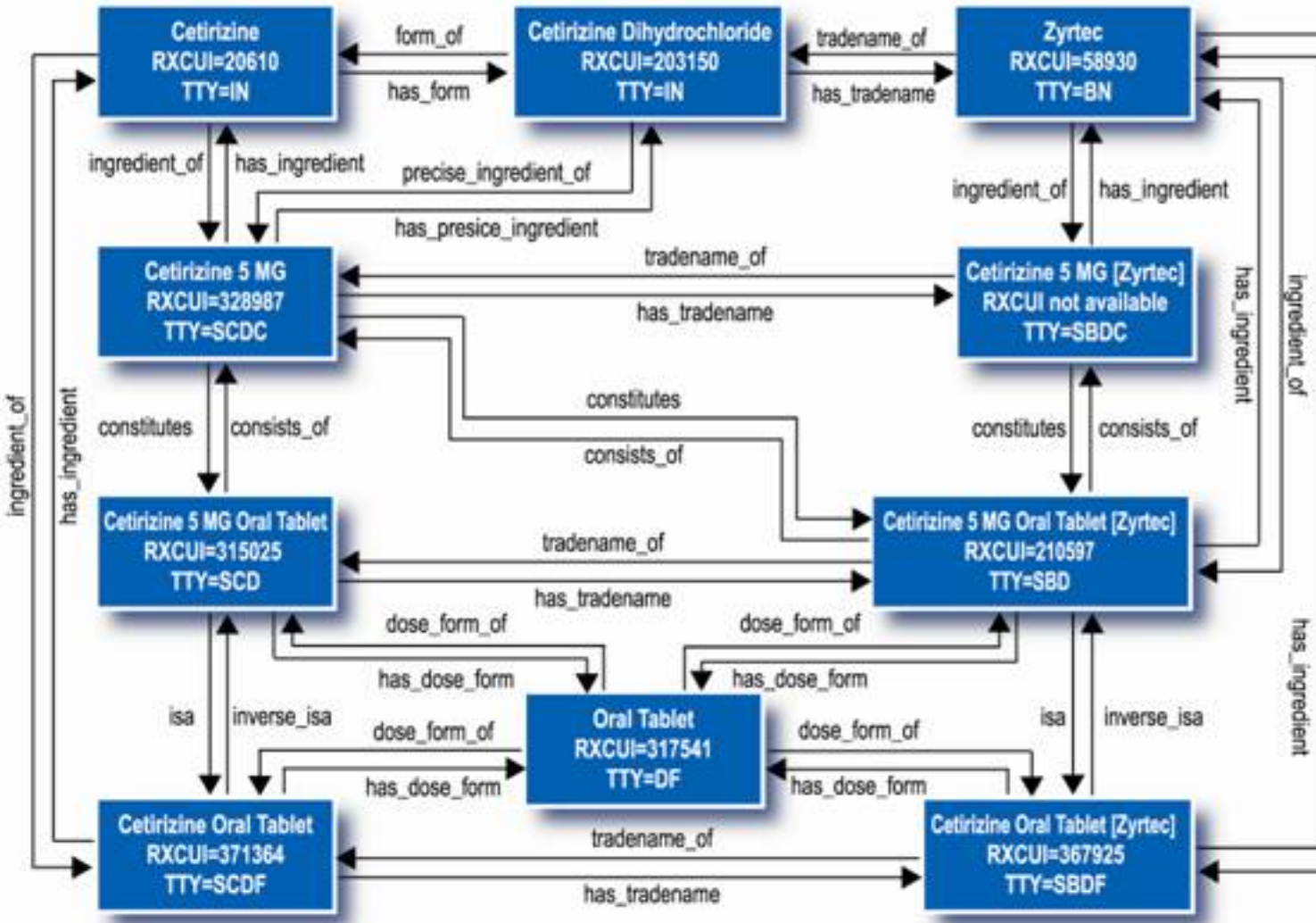
RxNorm's standard names for clinical drugs are connected to the varying names of drugs present in many different controlled vocabularies within the Unified Medical Language System (UMLS) Metathesaurus, including those in commercially available drug information sources. These connections are intended to facilitate interoperability among the computerized systems that record or process data dealing with clinical drugs.

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