Transparency Notice: Use of AI for Clinical Coding Optimisation at St. James's Hospital

Overview

St. James's Hospital (SJH) is undertaking a quality improvement initiative using artificial intelligence (AI) to support clinical coding and the secondary use of healthdata. This project does not affect individual patient care, but aims to enhance the accuracy and efficiency of hospital documentation. It is part of the hospital's commitment to improving internal data quality and operational processes.

What is Clinical Coding?

Clinical coding translates information from patient records (e.g., discharge summaries) into standardised medical codes, such as ICD-10 and SNOMED. These codes are vital for hospital funding, planning services, national reporting, and preparing data for research and audit.

What is Being Done?

AI tools, including natural language processing (NLP), are being used to assist trained clinical coders by highlighting potential codes based on existing clinical documentation. This does not replace human coders, all final decisions remain with qualified coding staff. The AI simply supports accuracy and in time will speed up review of each case.

What Data is Used?

The data used includes typed clinical notes, radiology reports, and laboratory results all stored securely within SJH systems. No new data is collected. No identifiable data is shared outside SJH, and all processing occurs within a secure Microsoft Fabric environment controlled by SJH and hosted in the European Union.

Who Has Access?

Access is strictly limited to:

- Authorised SJH staff in the **Information Management Services (IMS)** team
- The SJH **Clinical Coding Department**
- A small number of **contracted data scientists** working under SJH governance
- SJH Clinicians who provide clinical context and clarifications.

All access is role-based, audited, and subject to hospital data protection policies.

What Safeguards Are in Place?

- Data processed only within Microsoft Fabric under SJH control.
- Encryption, role-based access controls, and full audit logging.
- Use of pseudonymised(coded) data with no direct identifiers.
- AI outputs are always reviewed by human coders.

- No AI decisions are used for direct patient care.
- No data is shared with Microsoft, OpenAI, or any external vendor.
- Oversight by SJH's Data Protection Office and governance committee.

Why Is This Being Done?

Improved clinical coding:

- Ensures the complexity of patient care is fully and fairly recorded.
- Prepares SJH for national activity-based funding models.
- Enhances data quality for planning, audit, and service improvement
- Supports future research readiness while protecting patient privacy

Your Rights

This project is fully compliant with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If you wish to learn more or exercise your data protection rights, you can contact the Data Protection Office at St. James's Hospital – Email: dataprotection@stjames.ie. Full details on the data processing is available in the SJH Privacy Notice on our website.

Contact

For questions about this project, please contact:
✉ **aiclinicalcodingproject@stjames.ie**