

on the flowsheet. For example, displaying information about a medication infusion can involve the display of many different combinations of parameters. Placeholders are preferably defined in a table analogous to the parameter definition table. Each placeholder has a placeholder i.d., a name, and a list of parameters with which the placeholder may be replaced by the user. When the flowsheet is displayed, a user may select a display placeholder and replace it with one of its replacement parameters. In response, the facility replaces the placeholders with the selected replacement parameter, including any encapsulated parameters encapsulated by the selected replacement parameter. Placeholders, like parameters, may preferably be created and modified by authorized users in order to optimize them for the procedures of a particular health care organization. A placeholder may also encapsulate one or more other parameters or placeholders. Placeholders and parameters encapsulated by a placeholder are handled in the same manner as other placeholders and parameters. FIG. 16 is a flow diagram showing the steps preferably performed by the facility in order to replace such a placeholder with a particular parameter. These steps are largely similar to those shown in FIG. 15 for adding a parameter to the flowsheet, with the following exceptions: step 1601 prompts the user to select the parameter with which to replace the placeholder from the replacement list defined for the placeholder; step 1602 replaces the selected placeholder in the flowsheet definition with the selected parameter i.d.; and step 1605 displays the selected parameter and its results in place of the placeholder. FIG. 17 is a display diagram showing the replacement of medication infusion placeholder 824 with the dopamine infusion parameter 925.

The facility preferably also enables a user to quickly enter normal result values for each parameter in a group at a particular time. If the user selects a group, such as respiratory group 810 and a time label, such as time label 853 for 1:00 A.M. on Jul. 26th, the facility displays a group detail window. FIG. 18 is a partial screen diagram showing such a group detail window 1800 that contains indications of the selected group 1801 and of the selected time 1802. The window 1800 further contains a table 1810 containing the current result values 1811-1813 for the parameters of the selected group. The window 1800 further contains a normal values button 1823. If the user issues a normal values command by pressing the normal values button, the normal values for each of the parameters in the group are retrieved from their cached parameter definitions and entered as the result values for these parameters at the selected time. FIG. 19 is a screen diagram showing the entry of the normal values for the respiratory group 1910 at 1:00 A.M. on Jan. 26th. For example, the result value for the cough parameter 1911 is none, the normal value for the cough parameter.

Similarly, the facility preferably also enables a user to quickly copy the last result values recorded for each parameter in a flowsheet group forward to a later time. In order to do so, the user presses a last values button 1824 (FIG. 18).

Users may enter result values for parameters of a notes type, which can contain several paragraphs of text. Result values of parameters of the notes type are shown normally shown within a flowsheet in an abbreviated form. FIG. 20 is a screen diagram that showing a note parameter result value 2088 in abbreviated form, which is the last name of the writer. FIG. 21 is a screen diagram showing the display of the entire note parameter result value 2190 when the user selects the cell containing the abbreviated note parameter result value 2188. The entire result value shows all of the information associated with the note, including the full name

of the writer 2191, the time at which the note was written 2192, and the complete note text 2193. The user may dismiss the window containing the entire result value by selecting either the OK button 2194 or the cancel button 2195.

The facility further permits users to specify, for each classification, one or more default parameters. When the user creates a new encapsulating parameter in a classification, the facility displays the default parameters for the classification as proposed encapsulated parameters for the encapsulating parameters. The user may then delete any of the default parameters, and add any other desired encapsulated parameters to the created encapsulating parameters. Default parameters are useful in classifications such as medications, in which many drug parameters encapsulate the same encapsulated parameters, such as dose, dose units, and route.

In an additional preferred embodiment, the facility permits encapsulating parameters, as well as non-encapsulating result parameters, to be defined to contain result values. Those skilled in the art will recognize that the description of the facility described above may straightforwardly be adapted to enable encapsulating parameters to have result values. Such an adaptation merely requires the separation of data type and encapsulating information in the parameter definition table, which is discussed above in conjunction with FIG. 4; separate treatment of encapsulation and data type information in the parameter creation process, which is discussed above in conjunction with FIG. 5; and displaying an encapsulating parameter's result values instead of the result values of a primary encapsulated parameter of the encapsulating parameter beside the encapsulating parameter's name in a flowsheet, which is discussed above in conjunction with FIG. 8.

While this invention has been shown and described with reference to preferred embodiments, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that various changes or modifications in form and detail may be made without departing from the scope of the invention.

We claim:

1. A method in a computer system for designing, under the control of a user, a patient information hierarchy, the hierarchy containing a plurality of parameters including a linked-from parameter having a linked-from possible result value that is linked to one or more linked-to parameters, the method comprising the steps of:
 - (a) receiving an instruction from the user to create a new parameter within the patient information hierarchy;
 - (b) in response to step (a), creating a new parameter within the patient information hierarchy;
 - (c) receiving an instruction from the user to specify a plurality of indicated possible result values for the new parameter;
 - (d) in response to step (c), specifying the indicated possible result values as possible result values of the new parameter;
 - (e) receiving an instruction from the user to link an indicated linked-from possible result value among the possible result values of the new parameter to one or more indicated linked-to parameters contained within the patient information hierarchy; and
 - (f) in response to step (e), within the patient information hierarchy, linking the indicated linked-from possible result value to the indicated linked-to parameters, such that the new parameter is a linked-from parameter, and such that, when the new parameter is displayed for a particular patient, if the new parameter has the linked-