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Leveraging Transformers-based models and linked data for deep phenotyping in radiology

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A B S T R A C T

Background and Objective: Despite significant investments in the normalization and the standardization of Electronic Health Records (EHRs), free text is still the rule rather than the exception in clinical notes. The use of free text has implications in data reuse methods used for supporting clinical research since the query mechanisms used in cohort definition and patient matching are mainly based on structured data and clinical terminologies. This study aims to develop a method for the secondary use of clinical text by: (a) using Natural Language Processing (NLP) for tagging clinical notes with biomedical terminology; and (b) designing an ontology that maps and classifies all the identified tags to various terminologies and allows for running phenotyping queries.

Methods and Results: Transformers-based NLP Models, concretely pre-trained RoBERTa language models, were used to process radiology reports and annotate them identifying elements matching UMLS Concept Unique Identifiers (CUIs) definitions. CUIs were mapped into several biomedical ontologies useful for phenotyping (e.g., SNOMED-CT, HPO, ICD-10, FMA, LOINC, and ICPC2, among others) and represented as a lightweight ontology using OWL (Web Ontology Language) constructs. This process resulted in a Linked Knowledge Base (LKB), which allows running expressive queries to retrieve reports that comply with specific criteria using automatic reasoning.

Conclusion: Although phenotyping tools mostly rely on relational databases, the combination of NLP and Linked Data technologies allows us to build scalable knowledge bases using standard ontologies from the Web of data. Our approach enables us to execute a pipeline which input is free text and automatically maps identified entities to a LKB that allows answering phenotyping queries. In this work, we have only used Spanish radiology reports, although it is extensible to other languages for which suitable corpora are available. This is particularly valuable in regional and national systems dealing with large research databases from different registries and cohorts and plays an essential role in the scalability of large data reuse infrastructures that require indexing and governing distributed data sources.

1. Introduction

1.1. Problem

Secondary use of clinical data has seen an important development in the last decade [\[1\]](#page-19-0). Both national and international initiatives to enable data reuse across institutions have received significant funding. Examples are: the National Patient-Centered Clinical Research Network,

which has accumulated data from 80 million patients and several hundred hospitals since 2013 [\[2\]](#page-19-1); the Observational Health Data Sciences and Informatics, which has performed clinical studies at an international level encompassing more than 600 million patient records [[3](#page-19-2),[4](#page-19-3)]; and the European Health Data and Evidence Network, which aims to build a federated data warehouse of clinical data [\[5\]](#page-19-4). These initiatives have played a significant role in designing clinical studies by

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allowing multi-center evaluations and setting the foundations for effective electronic phenotyping. However, Real World Data (RWD) poses significant challenges due to its variability, context-dependent jargon, missing data, and ambiguity [\[6\]](#page-19-5). These challenges become exacerbated in clinical notes expressed as free text [[7](#page-19-6)], limiting the possibility of performing effective electronic phenotyping over Electronic Health Records (EHRs) [\[6](#page-19-5)[,8\]](#page-19-7). For this reason, the majority of data reuse infrastructures focus on parts of the EHR that are structured (e.g., patient summaries) or normalized cohorts databases, but they do not offer the amount of detail that personalized medicine requires for interpreting highly granular information items (i.e., performing Deep Phenotyping). Deep Phenotyping, understood as ''precise and comprehensive analysis of phenotypic abnormalities in which the individual components of the phenotype are observed and described'' [\[9\]](#page-19-8), requires the identification and detailed interpretation of clinical records in the EHR. Some records, such as medications, -Omics data, or laboratory tests, are structured and coded with international terminologies. However, other parts of the EHR, such as radiology reports, are often expressed as free text or semi-structured text and require Natural Language Processing (NLP) to extract the wealth of information in the EHR. Previous studies have used NLP to tackle this task $[10-12]$ $[10-12]$, but they did not close the data reuse loop by allowing running phenotyping queries over the notes processed with NLP.

In this study, we propose a methodology to advance the reuse of free text radiology reports in Spanish by using NLP transformer technology combined with biomedical ontologies and Linked Data. To that end, our methodology expresses clinical terms identified with NLP as an ontology that allows for running phenotyping queries based on the concept model of SNOMED-CT. This allows identifying granular entities needed for Deep Phenotyping and facilitates the Extraction Transformation and Load (ETL) for secondary use of clinical notes.

The paper is organized as follows. The rest of this section presents the state of the art in NLP, focusing on the biomedical domain, and highlights the novelty of the presented methodology. Section [2](#page-2-0) describes the whole system, from the clinical report to the built ontology. Section [3](#page-2-1) describes the dataset, use cases, transformer models, and the results of the NLP models. Section [4](#page-5-0) presents the ontologylearning pipeline and the ontology built from free text. Finally, Section [5](#page-8-0) contains the discussion, the comparison with similar works, and the limitations of this study.

1.2. What is already known

The representations of words or sequences of words (parts of a sentence, whole sentences, paragraphs, or documents) are a fundamental part for the syntactic and semantic text processing. In 2013, Mikolov et al. [\[13](#page-19-11)] introduced the concept of word embedding, which represented a major change in how most language processing tasks were approached, and brought significant improvements. Yet, in recent years, the development of the concept of contextual vector models of words (contextual embeddings) meant another critical leap in the results of the area.

In 2018, a new language representation model called BERT (Bidirectional Encoder Representations from Transformers) [[14\]](#page-19-12) was introduced. BERT's key technical innovation was applying the bidirectional training of Transformers (an attention mechanism that learns contextual relations between words or sub-words) to language modeling. The Transformer encoder processes the entire sequence of words at once. This characteristic allows the model to learn the context of a word based on its surroundings (both left and right) words. BERT is designed to pre-train deep bidirectional representations from unlabeled text by joint conditioning on both left and right context in all layers. As a result, the pre-trained BERT model can be fine-tuned with just one additional output layer to create state-of-the-art models for a wide range of classification tasks. The use of pre-trained language models has been shown to be very effective in improving many NLP tasks [[15,](#page-19-13)[16](#page-19-14)].

Since the BERT proposal, numerous advancements have been made in pre-trained language models, especially in developing models tailored to specific languages and domains [\[17\]](#page-19-15). One such model is RoBERTa [[18\]](#page-19-16), which builds on BERT's language masking strategy, wherein the system learns to predict intentionally hidden text sections within otherwise unannotated language examples. RoBERTa modifies key hyperparameters in BERT, including removing BERT's nextsentence pre-training objective, and training with much larger minibatches and learning rates. These adjustments allow RoBERTa to improve on the masked language modeling objective compared with BERT and leads to better downstream task performance.

However, challenges persist when applying models like RoBERTa to non-English languages, particularly Spanish, due to a lack of highquality, domain-specific Spanish corpora and the linguistic complexity of Spanish itself. Spanish has rich morphological features, such as gender and number inflections, which complicate model training and adaptation. In recent years, collaborative initiatives such as the IberLEF shared tasks [[19,](#page-19-17)[20\]](#page-19-18) have promoted the development of resources for Spanish biomedical NLP, but much work remains to achieve the performance levels seen in English-language models. Recent studies have adapted RoBERTa for Spanish biomedical applications. For instance, models used in [\[21](#page-19-19)[,22](#page-19-20)] have shown promising results by finetuning pre-trained RoBERTa-based models on Spanish clinical data. Notably, these models outperform earlier approaches in some biomedical tasks, demonstrating the effectiveness of RoBERTa's architecture when adapted to Spanish clinical text. Similarly, Carrino et al. [\[23](#page-19-21)[,24](#page-19-22)] utilized Spanish RoBERTa-based models for biomedical tasks, achieving better results than other pre-trained models.

The General Language Understanding Evaluation (GLUE) [\[25](#page-19-23)] benchmark was proposed in the NLP area. It consisted of a benchmark of nine diverse Natural Language Understanding tasks, an auxiliary dataset for probing models for understanding of specific linguistic phenomena, and an online platform for evaluating and comparing models. GLUE has successfully promoted the development of language representations of general purpose. To facilitate research on language representations in the biomedicine domain, the Biomedical Language Understanding Evaluation (BLUE) [[26\]](#page-19-24) benchmark has also been proposed. The benchmark consisted of five tasks with ten datasets covering biomedical and clinical texts with different dataset sizes and difficulties. GLUE and BLUE provide several tasks on which to compare models, and different labeled corpora to do fine-tuning and testing these models. However, it should be noted that all these corpora are in English.

In the biomedical domain, among recent works, PadChest [\[27](#page-19-25)] was the first large-scale dataset of chest X-rays and associated reports that implemented deep learning methods for labeling Spanish radiology reports at scale. Reports were labeled with 293 medical entities mapped to the standard Unified Medical Language System (UMLS) terminology and organized as a hierarchical taxonomy. The primary purpose of PadChest was to build a large annotated X-ray dataset to enable the training of supervised deep learning models in medical imaging. Since its publication [\[28](#page-19-26)], the dataset has been downloaded 3504 times from BIMCV, from 50 different countries. Its users include private and public health organizations and academic publications making using it [[29,](#page-19-27)[30\]](#page-19-28).

Although studies such as the ones aforementioned have used Machine Learning techniques to identify clinical concepts in free text [\[31](#page-19-29)], Machine Learning has not been extensively used for mapping other large corpora into multiple biomedical ontologies such as SNOMED-CT, the Human Phenotype Ontology (HPO), or the Foundational Model of Anatomy [\[10](#page-19-9)]. In the past, NLP methods outside Machine Learning were used to map clinical free text to terminologies. One of the pioneering works using NLP to map clinical text into a controlled vocabulary was described by Friedman and colleagues [[32\]](#page-19-30). Aronson [\[33](#page-19-31)] developed the MetaMap system to map medical text to the UMLS Metathesaurus using a combination of rules and several string-matching methods. Hammami et al. [\[34](#page-19-32)] recently used a rule-based NLP system to tag pathology reports in Italian with ICD-O-M. These methods were successful in mapping free text to terminologies, but the mappings produced were lists of terminology codes not formally expressed as an ontology (i.e., logic model). This translates into the need to directly query for the specific terminology codes (sometimes hundreds or even thousands) rather than using the relationships conveyed in biomedical ontologies to execute expressive queries (subsumption, equivalence, part of, etc.). For example, query for those radiology reports referring to some kind of neuropathy and retrieve all the reports tagged identifying a specific type of neuropathy (Myasthenia gravis, Iatrogenic neuropathy, Lipoma of nerve, etc.).

1.3. What this paper adds

This paper presents a methodology that uses transformer-based methods to process clinical reports in Spanish and express the extracted entities as an ontology compliant with Linked Data Principles. The innovation of this methodology is threefold. First, it leverages transformers technology on radiology reports written in Spanish and analyzes their performance over clinical reports, which include COVID tags. Second, the extracted entities are directly mapped to 12 biomedical terminologies using SNOMED-CT as the reference one. Third, all terminology mappings are expressed as a Linked Knowledge Base (LKB) allowing for using Linked Data technologies to run phenotyping queries.

2. The NLP-LKB system

The Gobierno de Canarias and the Generalitat Valenciana, through the Servicio Canario de la Salud and the Conselleria de Sanitat Universal i Salut Pública, respectively, considered innovation as an essential tool for improving health care. Consequently, the ''Big Data Personalized Medicine'' (MedP) project was launched [\[35](#page-19-33)], processed under the second call of the FID Salud Program, to support clinical decisions aimed at each individual patient with particular attention to chronic pathologies, and also creating a new patient interface supported by Artificial Intelligence. The MedP Project believes that innovation is fundamental in improving medical care. The FID Program is a government tool funded with FEDER pluri-regional funds for the period 2014–2020, and its objective is to promote innovation through the demand for innovative solutions by public administrations.

Within the framework of this project, we have worked on a use case whose main objective was the application of NLP in the domain of clinical reports. In particular, the goal was the knowledge extraction and automatic labeling in various terminologies (including SNOMED-CT coding) from conventional chest radiology reports.

A scheme of the system is shown in [Fig.](#page-3-0) [1.](#page-3-0) As illustrated, the system processes clinical reports written in Spanish and expresses the extracted entities as an ontology compliant with Linked Data Principles. This figure depicts an example of two reports processed through the NLP stages (see 1), terminology mapping (see 2), and ontology development to create the LKB (see 3). As shown in the figure, the output of the NLP stage (1) is the set of UMLS Concept Unique Identifiers (CUIs), to which the text segments were classified. In stage (2), using the set of CUIs, mappings among several terminologies of interest (e.g., HPO, FMA, ICD10 etc.) are defined. In stage (3), these mappings are processed to define a LKB supporting phenotyping queries over the mapped concepts.

3. The natural language processing module

The problem can be stated as follows: given a clinical report in Spanish, the objective is to automatically obtain the sequence of labels that explains the report in terms of radiographic findings and differential diagnoses. For example, given the report (in Spanish):

Fecha: 22/03/2020

Juicio clínico: valorar evolución radiológica neumonía por covid 19. En el momento actual se visualiza discreto aumento de la condensación pulmonar a nivel del campo medio derecho., Ligero empeoramiento radiológico.

From this free text clinical report, the system automatically extracts the following labels: "COVID-19", "consolidation", and "pneumonia". There is a 1-to-1 correspondence between labels and CUIs, therefore the sequence of CUIs (in the same order that the labels) that explains the clinical report is: C5203670, C0521530, and C0032285.

The task comprises three steps:

- 1. Preprocessing: Cleaning the report and extraction of the individual sentences.
- 2. Obtain the sequence of labels for each sentence.
- 3. The result is the union of the obtained sequence of labels for each sentence.

In order to obtain the sequence of labels for each sentence (step 2), a multi-label classifier is trained. Multi-label classification is a variant of the classification problem where multiple labels may be assigned to each instance. In our case, the instances are the sentences extracted from the clinical reports, and the labels are radiographic findings and differential diagnoses. The description of the set of predefined labels is presented in the next section. The multi-label classifier is a transformer-based model, described in Section [3.2.](#page-3-1)

3.1. Materials

A new dataset, comprising sentences extracted from biomedical reports in Spanish, was built to train our classification models. Those biomedical reports came from two different corpora, PadChest and BIMCV COVID-19, described below.

PadChest is a publicly labeled large-scale, high-resolution chest Xray dataset, and associated reports written in Spanish [[27\]](#page-19-25). This dataset includes more than 160,000 images obtained from 67,000 patients. Physicians developed PadChest by manually reviewing and identifying radiological findings from 22,120 unique sentences to the concepts that best identified the finding semantics in UMLS. Expert physicians manually annotated 27% of the reports, and the remaining reports were labeled using a supervised method based on a recurrent neural network with attention mechanisms. This resulted in a corpus made of multilabeled sentences and reports where each radiological entity is mapped to one UMLS CUI. Radiological entities were: 174 different radiological findings, 19 differential diagnoses, and 104 anatomic locations, organized as a hierarchical taxonomy and mapped onto standard UMLS terminology. A detailed description of the development of PadChest is available at Bustos et al. [\[27](#page-19-25)], and it can be downloaded from [https:](https://bimcv.cipf.es/bimcv-projects/padchest/) [//bimcv.cipf.es/bimcv-projects/padchest/.](https://bimcv.cipf.es/bimcv-projects/padchest/)

The BIMCV COVID-19 dataset is a large open multi-institutional dataset that provides the open scientific community with data of clinical-scientific value that will help the early detection and evolution of COVID-19 [\[28](#page-19-26)]. It is an annotated dataset that contains chest Xray images (CR and DX) and computed tomography (CT) imaging of patients with COVID-19 and no COVID-19 patients. Their radiological reports (in Spanish) are also attached, along with their radiological findings (the same 174 labels as PadChest) and locations, pathologies, DICOM metadata, Polymerase chain reaction, Immunoglobulin G, and Immunoglobulin M diagnostic antibody tests. The findings have been mapped onto standard UMLS terminology, covering a broad spectrum of thoracic entities. Two new labels for diagnoses are added, ''COVID-19'' and ''COVID-19 uncertain''. In addition, 23 sample images were annotated by expert radiologists to include semantic segmentation of radiological findings. The dataset can be downloaded from [http:](http://bimcv.cipf.es/bimcv-projects/bimcv-covid19/) [//bimcv.cipf.es/bimcv-projects/bimcv-covid19/](http://bimcv.cipf.es/bimcv-projects/bimcv-covid19/), and it is constantly

Fig. 1. Stages of the methodology: NLP, terminology mapping, and ontology development.

updated with new samples. At this time (second iteration), BIMCV COVID-19+ dataset comprises 7377 CR, 9463 DX, and 6687 CT studies.

Both publicly available datasets, PadChest and BIMCV COVID-19, were used to build a new dataset, called Chest+COVID, of biomedical reports in Spanish, choosing the manually annotated reports from both datasets for more than 26,000 reports. These reports were preprocessed to extract sentences, resulting in 28,128 sentences after eliminating duplicates. A total number of 299 labels appeared in the dataset (174 radiographic findings, 19 differential diagnoses, and 104 anatomic locations from the PadChest dataset, and the two new labels included in BIMCV COVID-19). The anatomic locations were extracted by using regular expressions, and the remaining 195 labels were extracted with transformers. The Chest+COVID dataset was stratified random sampling and split into training (25,315 sentences), validation (1,406 sentences), and test (1,407 sentences) partitions. Some statistics are shown in [Table](#page-3-2) [1.](#page-3-2) A histogram of the most frequent labels in each partition is shown in [Fig.](#page-4-0) [2.](#page-4-0) Specifically, the histogram accounts for the 80 labels (out of 195) with more samples in the training partition.

3.2. Methods

The Chest+COVID dataset was used to fine-tune a transformer based on RoBERTa architecture [\[18\]](#page-19-16), for the multi-label classification task. In particular, we used the so-called RoBERTa-base-biomedicalclinical-es model [[23\]](#page-19-21), trained by the Barcelona Supercomputing Center under the Plan de Impulso de las Tecnologías del Lenguaje of the Spanish Government. The RoBERTa-base-biomedical-clinical-es model is a biomedical pre-trained language model for Spanish. It is ready-touse only for masked language modeling to perform the Fill Mask task

Table 1

Statistics of the biomedical Chest+COVID dataset: the number of sentences, words, and labels, detailing the total and the average number of words and labels in the sentences. The vocabulary is composed of 5,815 words.

	Sentences	Words		Labels	
		(total)	(average)	(total)	(average)
Training	25,315	263,999	10.43	32.989	1.30
Validation	1,406	14,617	10.40	1,847	1.31
Test	1,407	15.011	10.67	1.849	1.31
Total	28.128	293,627	10.44	36,685	1.30

(predicting which words should replace a mask, a gap in a sentence). However, it is intended to be fine-tuned on downstream tasks such as Named Entity Recognition or Text Classification. Our goal is to finetune this model for multi-label classification of the sentences extracted from biomedical reports and our set of 195 labels. The selection of the pre-trained RoBERTa-base-biomedical-clinical-es Spanish language model was primarily motivated by its use of the RoBERTa model, which is considered state-of-the-art for many NLP tasks in languages such as English. Furthermore, in the case of Spanish, previous research has compared this model with other language models, such as those discussed in [[23,](#page-19-21)[24\]](#page-19-22). It concluded that using pre-trained models specific to the biomedical domain leads to the best results for various NLP tasks in biomedicine. Several other studies have reached similar conclusions for English [\[36](#page-19-34)].

The training dataset for the RoBERTa-base-biomedical-clinical-es model comprises various biomedical corpora in Spanish, compiled from publicly available corpora and trackers, and a clinical dataset from

Fig. 2. Histogram of the 80 most frequent labels (out of 195) in training, detailed for each partition of the Chest+COVID dataset.

more than 278,000 documents and clinical notes. In order to obtain a high-quality training dataset while preserving the idiosyncrasies of clinical language, the cleaning pipeline has been applied only to the biomedical dataset, keeping the clinical dataset uncleaned. Essentially, the cleaning operations used are: sentence separation, language detection, filtering of poorly constructed sentences, removal of duplicate content, keep the limits of the original document.

The biomedical corpora were concatenated, and additional global deduplication was applied among the biomedical corpora. Finally, the clinical dataset was concatenated with the clean biomedical dataset, resulting in a medium-sized biomedical-clinical dataset for Spanish composed of more than 1,000 millions tokens. The training partition was tokenized using a byte version of Byte-Pair Encoding used in the original RoBERTa model with a vocabulary size of 52,000 tokens. Then, the masked language model was re-trained at the subword level following the approach used for the base model of RoBERTa with the same hyperparameters proposed in the original work. All the details of the pre-trained RoBERTa model can be found at: [https://huggingface.](https://huggingface.co/PlanTL-GOB-ES/roberta-base-biomedical-clinical-es) [co/PlanTL-GOB-ES/roberta-base-biomedical-clinical-es](https://huggingface.co/PlanTL-GOB-ES/roberta-base-biomedical-clinical-es).

As stated before, the RoBERTa-base-biomedical-clinical-es model was fine-tuned by using the Chest+COVID dataset to train a multilabel transformer classifier to assign the corresponding set of labels to each sentence extracted from the clinical reports. Specifically, our model consisted of 12 transformer layers, each with 768 hidden units

and 12 attention heads. The final layer was a fully connected (dense) layer with a Tanh activation function, allowing the model to perform multi-class, multi-label classification. This setup enables the model to assign multiple labels to each input sentence. In total, the model has 125*,* 978*,* 112 parameters, allowing for a robust and scalable classification process. The model can be downloaded on our Hugging Face page (at ''https://huggingface.co/ELiRF/Chest-COVID/'').

3.3. Experimentation and results

The NLP module assigns some labels (out of a set of 195 labels) to each report, but the classification process is done at the sentence level. During inference, the model classifies the report sentences. Sentencelevel predictions are then combined to obtain the label sequence of a complete report, keeping in mind that some classes, such as ''normal'' or "exclude", are exclusive and are eliminated in case the model predicts them together with any other label. For this reason, both the training of the model and the evaluation of its performance were done at the sentence level. In the following subsections, the training strategy of the classification models and the evaluation of their performance on the test partition are discussed.

3.3.1. Experimentation

The classification task addressed in this work is challenging due to the large number of labels and the imbalanced distribution of these

Table 2

Hyperparameters considered in the optimization process.

Hyperparameter	Values considered
hidden dropout	[0.05, 0.1]
attention probs dropout	[0.05, 0.1]
num_train_epochs	[100, 150]
learning rate	$[2e-5, 1e-4]$
batch size	${16, 32}$
weight decay	[0.001, 0.01]
Ir scheduler type	{constant, linear}

labels. Such imbalance typically causes the model to focus primarily on classes with the highest number of samples, often neglecting those that are rarely encountered during training. To mitigate this issue, we selected the macro F1-score as the objective function for the fine-tuning process. This metric averages the F1 scores of all classes equally, disregarding their sample frequency, thus encouraging balanced performance across classes.

For model fine-tuning, a hyperparameter optimization was performed to identify optimal values that maximize the macro F1-score on the validation set. We conducted a total of ten optimization runs: five with a linear learning rate scheduler and five with a constant learning rate scheduler. The Optuna hyperparameter optimization framework [[37\]](#page-19-35) was used for this purpose, as it provides efficient searching and pruning algorithms. [Table](#page-5-1) [2](#page-5-1) details the parameters subject to optimization. The other hyperparameters of the base model (such as the number of attention heads per layer, number of layers, feed-forward layer dimensionality, and the dimensionality of Q , K , and V projections) were kept unchanged. Complete details for these parameters can be found in the base model's configuration file at [https://huggingface.](https://huggingface.co/PlanTL-GOB-ES/roberta-base-biomedical-clinical-es/blob/main/config.json) [co/PlanTL-GOB-ES/roberta-base-biomedical-clinical-es/blob/main/con](https://huggingface.co/PlanTL-GOB-ES/roberta-base-biomedical-clinical-es/blob/main/config.json) [fig.json](https://huggingface.co/PlanTL-GOB-ES/roberta-base-biomedical-clinical-es/blob/main/config.json). The loss function used was binary cross-entropy, calculated between the reference labels and the probability predicted by the model for each label.

The results on the validation set during the fine-tuning showed that the runs that used a linear scheduler achieved better results than those that used a constant scheduler. For this reason, we focused the analysis on the five runs with a linear scheduler for the learning rate (''lr_scheduler_type=linear''). The values obtained by these five runs were relatively similar.

The most relevant hyperparameters of each run are shown in [Table](#page-6-0) [3.](#page-6-0) The selection criteria for the best epoch of each run was the macro F1-score on the validation partition. That is, for each run, the epoch that maximized the result of the macro F1-score on the validation set was chosen. [Table](#page-6-1) [4](#page-6-1) shows the macro averaged results of the best epoch of the five runs on the validation set in terms of precision, recall, and F1-score. Run-3 is the model which obtained the maximum value for macro F1-score on the validation set (a value of 0.6996 at epoch 94).

3.3.2. Results

After fine-tuning was completed and the hyperparameters were optimized, the best model was evaluated on the test set. [Table](#page-6-2) [5](#page-6-2) presents the performance metrics (precision, recall, and F1-score) of the best run at its optimal epoch. We assess three different averaging methods: micro averaging (assigns equal weight to each sample), macro averaging (assigns equal weight to each label), and weighted averaging (weights each label based on support). The macro averaged measures were obtained by averaging on the 195 labels which appeared in the training partition, while only 151 did appear in the test partition. As stated above, the evaluation is conducted at the sentence level, as both training and ground-truth labeling were performed at this granularity.

The model's macro-averaged results on the test set are consistent with those observed during fine-tuning. As is typical in multi-label classification tasks with substantial class imbalance, the values for macro averaged measures are lower than those for micro or weighted averaged values. It is important to note that macro results are computed by averaging over all classes in the task, regardless of whether they appear in the test partition or are simply hypothesized by the model.

To better understand how class imbalance impacts model performance, we conducted a detailed analysis of the model's performance across different label frequency groups. [Fig.](#page-6-3) [3](#page-6-3) illustrates the evolution of micro and macro metrics as a function of label frequency, with labels ordered by their occurrence in the training set. This figure also shows the number of test samples associated with each label.

This analysis reveals a noticeable drop in macro metric performance after the 100 most frequent labels. Consequently, model performance was evaluated using three specific label sets: (1) the 100 most frequent labels in the training set, (2) the remaining, less frequent, labels (95 labels), and (3) labels present in the test set (151 labels). [Table](#page-7-0) [6](#page-7-0) presents these results. A breakdown of results by label in terms of true positives, false positives, false negatives, precision, recall, and F1-score is provided in [Appendix](#page-11-0) [A](#page-11-0).

The model performs best when limited to the 100 most frequent labels in the training set, where these labels are well-represented, leading to stronger predictive outcomes. The results for the 95 less frequent labels, though challenging, are also noteworthy; among these, only 34 labels appear in the test set, yet the model achieves competitive performance, demonstrating its adaptability. Lastly, the most insightful results come from focusing only on labels present in the test set, providing a fairer assessment by excluding labels absent from the test set from the computation formulas. This approach avoids the dilution effect caused by including labels with no test examples, resulting in a clearer view of the model's performance compared to the aggregate results shown in [Table](#page-6-2) [5](#page-6-2).

4. Terminology mapping and phenotyping queries

4.1. Methods

4.1.1. Methodology for terminology mapping

The input to the terminology mapping stage is the set of UMLS CUIs assigned to each radiology report by the NLP module. Querying biomedical reports using various coding systems requires mapping the extracted UMLS CUIs to these code systems. In the case study presented, the terminological mapping has been carried out from CUIs to SNOMED-CT, ICD-10, the Human Phenotype Ontology (HPO), ATC, LOINC, ICPC2, MSHSPA (MeSH Spanish version), MDRSPA (MedDRA Spanish version), MedlinePlus, NCI_PI-RADS, NCI_caDSR and Foundational Model of Anatomy (FMA). We reused mappings already available in the UMLS Metathesaurus. Mappings were retrieved by querying the UMLS terminology service to retrieve the mappings available for each CUIs assigned to each report. When mappings were not available for a given UMLS CUI, ad hoc mappings were developed by searching in the online browser of SNOMED International, the definition associated with each CUI, and selecting the best candidate (see [Appendix](#page-15-0) [B](#page-15-0)).

4.1.2. Methodology for linked knowledge base development

Enabling the execution of phenotyping queries at a computational level requires a logic model that allows the analysis of relationships (e.g., equivalence mappings and parent–child relationships) among terminological concepts. Following the methodology described in previous works [[38\]](#page-19-36), we developed a SNOMED-CT model expressed in RDF(S). In compliance with ontology design patterns [[39\]](#page-19-37), this model provided a logic underpinning (i.e., the main taxonomy) to which concepts from other terminologies were mapped. This implies that the resulting ontology will rely on the organization of SNOMED-CT's polyhierarchy, and concepts from other terminologies will be attached to the correct level of it using equivalence axioms between each concept and its SNOMED-CT equivalent. When a mapping was available, UMLS CUIs were mapped to SNOMED-CT using OWL (Web Ontology Language) axioms. Similarly, all the other concepts from different terminologies

Table 3

Hyperparameters of each run. The rest of the parameters do not vary (num_attention_heads = 12; num_hidden_layers = 12; hidden_act = gelu; hidden size = 768; intermediate size = 3072; max position embeddings = 514).

Parameter	$run-1$	$run-2$	run-3	$run-4$	run-5
hidden_dropout	0.0943	0.0812	0.0592	0.0843	0.0515
attention_probs_dropout	0.0501	0.0530	0.0936	0.0704	0.0662
num_train_epochs	126	142	139	145	143
learning rate	9.9078e-5	3.3736e-5	$6.1254e - 5$	$6.8333e - 5$	$2.2627e - 5$
batch size	32	16	32	32	32
weight decay	0.0011	0.0057	0.0010	0.0094	0.0034
Ir scheduler type	linear	linear	linear	linear	linear

Fig. 3. Evolution of performance metrics (micro and macro averaged) as a function of label frequency. Labels are ordered according to frequency in the training set, showing model performance across high- and low-frequency classes.

Table 4

Macro averaged results of the best epoch of the five runs on the validation set in terms of Precision, Recall, and F1-score. The total number of labels in the validation set is 1,847.

Run	Best Epoch	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
$run-1$	37	0.7006	0.6939	0.6918	1,847
$run-2$	85	0.7125	0.6993	0.6983	1,847
run-3	94	0.7193	0.6948	0.6996	1,847
run-4	45	0.7098	0.6933	0.6949	1,847
$run-5$	61	0.7065	0.6896	0.6905	1,847

Table 5

Overall results on the test set, showing micro, macro and weighted averages for Precision, Recall, and F1-score. The total number of labels in the test set is 1,849. Macro averaged measures obtained by averaging on the whole set of 195 labels which appeared in the training partition.

	Precision	Recall	F1-score	Support
Micro averaging	0.956	0.945	0.950	1.849
Macro averaging	0.706	0.688	0.691	1.849
Weighted averaging	0.957	0.945	0.949	1.849

were mapped to their corresponding UMLS CUI. This chain of equivalence relationships allowed the triple store DB to reason transitively, determining equivalences among concepts even when they were not directly linked. All the axioms and properties of the model were expressed following Linked Data Principles for scalability and interoperability reasons. Thus, the knowledge graph developed forms a LKB, which allows for reasoning over the relationships and axioms defined [[38\]](#page-19-36). SNOMED-CT was chosen as the central reference ontology (and hierarchical logic model) to structure the LKB because it has extensive coverage of clinical concepts and an underlying machine-understandable logical model, which other terminologies lack. A representation in lightweight semantics (RDF(S)) was chosen over more expressive logics (e.g., OWL-DL) because it is computationally lighter and more compatible with graph databases and triple stores. The LKB was deployed in a triple store DB (Graph DB version 10.1), which supported expressive queries in SPARQL language. [Fig.](#page-7-1) [4](#page-7-1) shows the results of the terminology mapping and phenotyping queries executed.

Beyond biomedical ontologies, three other ontologies were used to build the LKB: the Dublin Core (DC), schema.org, and the Minimal Service Model (MSM). The Dublin Core Metadata Initiative (DCMI) (www.dublincore.org/) is an international project currently part of ASIS&T. It focuses on developing best practices and ontologies for the

Table 6

Performance on the test set for different subsets of labels, divided into high-frequency and low-frequency groups. The table presents Precision, Recall, and F1 scores, for micro and macro averaging. The high-frequency label group contains 1,815 labels, while the low-frequency group contains 34 labels, offering a detailed view of model performance across varying label frequencies. The total number of labels in the test set is 1,849. Macro averaged measures for high- and low-frequency labels were obtained by averaging on the whole set of 195 labels which appeared in the training partition. Macro averaged measures for all test labels were obtained by averaging on the reduced set of 151 labels which appeared in the test partition.

Fig. 4. Terminology mapping and ontology development of the Linked Knowledge Base.

specification of metadata about physical or online resources. Its developments have become the de facto standard for catalogers and open government data publication. Schema.org is a collaborative community promoted by private actors such as Google, Yahoo, Microsoft, and Yandex. Since 2011, schema.org has gained momentum for improving semantic searches on the internet. While the DC provides more abstract ontologies to attach metadata, schema.org has expanded to specific domains such as medicine. In our developments, we prioritized the use of DC because it is more established and aligned with standardization organizations such as W3C. When DC concepts did not suffice to represent the metadata about reports, we used concepts from schema.org. A different ontology used in the design of the LKB is MSM. Its nature differs from the DC and schema.org in that it is not intended to specify resources metadata but to provide a link between Web services and the ontological specification of an LKB. Therefore, its concepts were used to specify what a report is and 'glue' the ontology developed using SNOMED-CT to metadata expressed with DC and schema.org specifying which Web services expose these reports.

4.2. Results

[Fig.](#page-7-1) [4](#page-7-1) depicts the stages regarding terminology mapping (see 2) and ontology development to create the LKB (see 3). As explained in previous sections, the output of the NLP stage was the set of UMLS CUIs to which the text segments were classified.

In the second stage (2), CUIs were mapped to SNOMED-CT, ICD-10, Human Phenotype Ontology (HPO), ATC, LOINC, ICPC2, MSHSPA (MeSH Spanish version), MDRSPA (MedDRA Spanish version), Medline-Plus, NCI PI-RADS, NCI caDSR, and Foundational Model of Anatomy (FMA). The release of SNOMED-CT selected was the US version. While the choice of the US version may seem counterintuitive, it was motivated by the fact that the coverage of mappings between UMLS CUIs and concepts from the SNOMED-CT US version is higher than in the Spanish version. For example, at the moment of writing, the CUI C1709576 has a mapping in SNOMED-CT US to ''Mass of pleura'' (SCTID=540881000124100), but there is no mapping available to the Spanish version (SCTSPA) in UMLS. Note that this choice on the SNOMED-CT version does not affect NLP performance because NLP, as described in Section [3](#page-2-1), is only mapped to CUIs. The coverage of mappings for SNOMED-CT was the following. The Chest+COVID dataset contains a total of 299 concepts. Of these, 245 (81.9%) had been assigned a UMLS CUI, and of these 245, 177 (72.24%) had a mapping from UMLS CUI to SNOMED-CT available at UMLS terminology service. The remaining 68 had no mapping available to SNOMED-CT (27.75%). Of these 68, 54 could be mapped ad hoc to one SNOMED-CT US concept, eight had to be mapped to a more general concept in SNOMED-CT, four required postcoordination to express their semantics, and two did not have a candidate nor could they be expressed using postcoordination. Those requiring postcoordination for the anatomical qualifier were implemented with the pattern described in the following sections. Non-anatomical qualifiers for these two concepts were disregarded. Beyond SNOMED-CT, concepts were mapped to more domain-specific terminologies when applicable. Specifically, 18 concepts were mapped to ICD-10, 49 were mapped to HPO, 35 were mapped to ICPC-2, 63 were mapped to MDRSPA, 18 were mapped to MEDLINEPLUS, 69 terms were mapped to FMA. The remaining terminologies were included but had no mapping from Chest+COVID (ATC, LOINC, NCI PI-RADS, caDSR). The reason is that BIMCV also includes images captured by other methods and body parts, such as those related to prostate cancer.

After terminology mapping (2), it is possible to identify equivalent terms to implement phenotyping queries. However, it is not possible to reason over the mappings to, for example, deal with *is-a* (subsumption) relationships among concepts querying for a given concept and letting the DB to retrieve all the children of that concept. To tackle this issue, [Fig.](#page-7-1) [4](#page-7-1) shows in (3) how the resulting LKB formalizes all the relationships among the terminologies supported. First, the SNOMED-CT lite RDF(S) (see white ellipses in [Fig.](#page-7-1) [4\)](#page-7-1) version was generated to have a complete and sound organization of clinical concepts with a formal logic model that allows for reasoning in a triple store DB. Second, all terminology mappings produced in (2) were processed. An *owl:equivalentClass* axiom was produced for each mapping, relating equivalent concepts among the terminologies supported. [Fig.](#page-7-1) [4](#page-7-1) represents HPO concepts with gray hexagons, FMA concepts with yellow hexagons, and UMLS concepts with blue rectangles. For each report, a relationship *lkb:referencesLocationConcept* was produced, linking each report to the anatomical locations it references. The development of this relationship is a decision aiming for interoperability among triple stores DBs. Although the SNOMED-CT concept model allows qualifying anatomical locators using postcoordinated expressions, that would constrain the set of triple stores that could be used to process these expressions. Hence, we opted to model references to anatomical locations with an explicit relationship. The phenotyping queries developed in SPARQL code are available in [Appendix](#page-16-0) [C](#page-16-0). [Fig.](#page-7-1) [4](#page-7-1) shows an excerpt of the LKB to explain how the DB reasons over the LKB to answer Query 1 and Query 2 from [Table](#page-9-0) [7](#page-9-0).

The execution of Query 1 *''retrieve all radiologic reports that contain a Pleural effusion in the left lung''* in [Fig.](#page-7-1) [4](#page-7-1) is depicted by highlighting in green the properties and OWL axioms analyzed. Query 1 uses the HPO concept *HP:0002202 (Pleural effusion)*, which is equivalent to the concept *C0032227 (Pleural effusion)* in UMLS. By analyzing this equivalence relationship, the DB will determine that the concept *HP:0002202 (Pleural effusion)* is indirectly referenced by the report with identifier *4991845* through the *referencesConcept* relationship of concept UMLS: C0032227. With regards to the location of the finding (i.e., left lung), the DB will infer that the concept in SNOMED-CT *44029006 (Left lung structure)* is equivalent to the FMA concept *7310 (Left Lung)* (referenced in the query) by transitively analyzing the equivalences of UMLS: C0225730. In addition, the DB will determine by subsumption that SNOMED-CT 41224006 is also an FMA:7310 (concept referenced in the query). Since *SNOMED-CT 41224006* is referenced by the report through the *referencesLocationConcept* property in UMLS: C0225749 (Structure of posterior basal segment of the left lobe of the lung), the report will be eligible to be returned as a query result. In this way, both

the finding and the anatomical location referenced in the query will be considered, and the report identifier 4765778 will be returned.

[Fig.](#page-7-1) [4](#page-7-1) shows the execution of Query 2: *''Retrieve those images where it is observed a radiologic infiltrate in a bronchopulmonary segment structure''*. The figure depicts the properties and OWL axioms analyzed with blue arrows to determine the query results. To answer this query, the triple store DB reasons over the LKB determining that the concept in the HPO *HP:0002113 (radiologic infiltrate)* is equivalent to UMLS concept *C1265599* which, in turn, is referenced by the radiology report with identifier *4765778*. Additionally, it determines the valid locations for the concept *radiologic infiltrate* by: (a) analyzing that the SNOMED-CT concept *46148009 (Structure of posterior basal segment of the left lower lobe of the lung)* is a *subClassOf SNOMED-CT 72674008 Bronchopulmonary segment structure*; and, (b) analyzing that *46148009 is equivalentTo C0225749* which is directly referenced by the report with identifier *4765778*.

[Fig.](#page-10-0) [5](#page-10-0) depicts the architecture used to execute queries. Stage I represents the NLP processing and ontology development, resulting in the LKB stored as a graph in the triple store. Stage II represents executing a query over the triple store to retrieve a report. Specifically, the clinical data scientist on top of [Fig.](#page-10-0) [5](#page-10-0) types a query using the SPARQL language to retrieve the radiologic reports referencing the disorder *''pleural effusion''* and the anatomical location *''left lung''* (see WHERE section of the query). As explained previously, the triple store (Graph database) executes the query transitively, analyzing all the relationships in the LKB. The report that complies with the phenotyping criteria is then returned to the user.

The LKB developed aims to go beyond the design of an ad-hoc knowledge graph by maximizing its interoperability and ontology reuse [[39\]](#page-19-37). This was achieved by not only committing to biomedical ontologies but to general metadata ontologies. Specifically, we reused concepts from schema.org [\[40](#page-19-38)], the Dublin Core [[41\]](#page-19-39) and the Minimal Service Model [[42\]](#page-20-0). From schema.org MedicalProcedure was subclassed to specify the Report concept, MedicalStudy to identify the specific study responsible for eliciting this report, and Patient to model patients metadata such as pseudonym, age, and gender. ImageObject to model DICOM image metadata. MSM was used to link the ontological definition of clinical and report-related concepts (study, patient etc.) to the syntactic layer of the Web service, specifying where the endpoint is and the message produced by the Web service. Dublin Core was used for metadata location such as provenance, data set creator, etc. The design based on ontology reuse and Linked Data facilitates the compliance with Findability, Accessibility, Interoperability, and Reusability (FAIR) principles [\[43](#page-20-1)] and Open Science [[44](#page-20-2)] by allowing the publication, discovery, and exploration of the LKB by computers.

5. Discussion

5.1. NLP and transformer-based models

There are several studies making use of transformers for NLP on clinical text. EHR text may lead to different performances than medical literature or general language when using transformers. In [\[45](#page-20-3)], the authors evaluated word embeddings trained from different types of corpora (EHR, medical literature, Wikipedia, and news). In their results, clinical notes from the EHR and medical literature captured the semantics of medical terms in the way closest to human judgment. In [\[46](#page-20-4)], the authors proposed a framework as a preliminary step to understand textual spatial semantics in chest X-ray reports. In their framework, common radiological entities tied to spatial relations are encoded through four spatial roles: trajector, landmark, diagnosis, and hedge, all identified in relation to a spatial preposition (or spatial indicator). Their study used bidirectional long-short term memory (Bi-LSTM) as a base model and compared it with two models using transformers (BERT and XLNet). The best-performing models were both XLNet and BERT, pre-trained with the medical dataset MIMIC-III. A **Table 7**

List of phenotyping queries implemented with their description, terminologies used and type of reasoning to find query results. See [C](#page-16-0) for SPARQL implementation.

Query id	Text definition	Reasoning
Query 1	Retrieve all radiologic images that contain a Pleural effusion in the left lung	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence among HPO, UMLS, SNOMED-CT and FMA
Ouery 2	Retrieve those images where it is observed a radiologic infiltrate in a bronchopulmonary segment structure	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence among HPO, UMLS and SNOMED-CT
Query 3	Retrieve patients with widened mediastinum	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence between UMLS and SNOMED-CT
Query 4	Retrieve all reports with any radiology finding observed in the mediastinal area	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence between UMLS and SNOMED-CT
Query 5	Retrieves all images that have some type of catheter	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence between UMLS and SNOMED-CT
Ouery 6	Retrieves all images where fractures are observed in the shoulder region	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence among FMA, UMLS and SNOMED-CT
Query 7	recover images with multiple nodules and pseudonodules	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence among HPO, UMLS and SNOMED-CT
Ouery 8	Recover images with a finding of atelectasis	Subsumption over SNOMED-CT, equivalence among ICD-10, UMLS, SNOMED-CT

subdomain that has received lots of attention is the processing of free text medication orders. In [[47\]](#page-20-5), GloVe word vectors trained from MIMIC III were used, and four models for supervised classification were tested (Multinomial Naive Bayes, Decision Trees, Support Vector Machines, and CRFs). In a second step, the medication items (dosage, mode, frequency etc.) were extracted. Multi-label CRF was selected as the optimal method for medication information extraction. Their work did not perform terminology matching for phenotyping.

Several works have worked in NLP on pathology reports to identify location and morphology of tumors. Oleynic et al. [\[48](#page-20-6)] used Support Vector Machines to classify pathology reports into ICD-O. Mitchel et al. [[49\]](#page-20-7) proposed a 3-stage method for processing pathology reports. In the first stage, they created a pathology language model using BioBERT and a subset of MIMIC III concerning discharge summaries. In the second stage, they used SQuAD and BioASQ datasets to train a question answering model that could retrieve the organs containing a tumor and the kind of tumor. In the third stage, they trained 2 additional models to predict the ICD-O-3 codes that corresponded to the location and type of tumor retrieved in the second stage. Our methodology has not used question answering models such as SQuAD. A relevant future work is the comparison of the performance of these methods with ours to map to UMLS CUIs. Also, in the pathology domain, Rios et al. [\[50](#page-20-8)] used a neural multi-task training with hierarchical regularization to process pathology reports to integrate concept embeddings into the ICD-O-3 hierarchy. This technique could be used in our pipeline to automatically process concepts without SNOMED-CT mapping in UMLS and link them to the correct concept in the SNOMED-CT hierarchy.

Coutinho and Martins [[11\]](#page-19-40) used BERT-based models to map causes of death from death certificates in Portuguese into their corresponding ICD-10 codes. Their work used a BERT model trained on the Brazilian Wikipedia data and the brWac dataset. Adjustment of parameters to clinical text was made with self-supervised pre-training tasks. The authors used a novel pre-training procedure that incorporates in-domain knowledge, and also a fine-tuning method to address the class imbalance issue. Experimental results show that, in this particular clinical task that requires the processing of relatively short documents, Transformer-based models can achieve very competitive results. This work presents quite a few similarities with the part of our work that performs the labeling from the free text of the EHRs. There are also recent works based on different machine learning methods to obtain classifiers. López-Úbeda and colleagues [[51\]](#page-20-9) develop a text classification system based on NLP in order to automatically assign one protocol to each radiological request form prescribed by reference physicians. For this task they used two training Spanish corpora. Olthof and colleagues [\[52](#page-20-10)] classify radiology reports in orthopedic trauma for

the presence of injuries. They used a dataset of Dutch radiology reports of injured extremities and a dataset of chest radiographs.

Another feature of our study is using transformers on a Spanish clinical corpus. Most of the studies mentioned were done in English on similar corpora (e.g. MIMIC III, Medical literature, UW Dataset). Our study demonstrates that transformer-based methods can be applied to other languages, such as Spanish, while maintaining a good performance.

5.2. Linked knowledge base design

Concerning the design of the LKB, a first difference in the treatment of relationships between concepts can be found between our study and Datta et al. [\[46](#page-20-4)]. Datta and colleagues focused on identifying spatial relationships, but terminology linkage still needed to be performed. In our study, we did not perform spatial relationship analysis at the NLP stage. However, we dealt with anatomical locations by mapping them to FMA and SNOMED-CT, thus allowing for reasoning over partonomies. For example, if a phenotyping query asks for the radiology reports that mentioned any fracture in the region of the shoulder; reports mentioning fractures in the acromioclavicular joint, rotator cuff, supraspisnous humeral head, humeral neck and so on, will be retrieved. The reason is that these concepts are related by is-a (rdfs:SubClassOf) relationships with the *shoulder region structure (16982005)*. Another design decision that differs from other works is the specification of the semantics regarding clinical findings and anatomical locations using *lkb:referencesConcept* and *lkb:referencesLocationConcept* relationships, respectively. In many cases, only the former may be needed since the clinical finding hierarchy (404684003) in SNOMED-CT contains precoordinated terms that directly relate the finding and the anatomical location (e.g., *445249002 | Multiple nodules of lung (disorder)*). However, there are cases where a precoordinated term specifying both the clinical finding and the anatomical location is unavailable. A possible approach to this may be using the postcoordination mechanism provided by SNOMED-CT. However, this may hamper interoperability. While some reasoners perform well in classifying postcoordinated concepts [\[53](#page-20-11)], not all of them support the semantics derived from postcoordinated constructs. In our design, we adopted a more flexible approach where the anatomical location in the finding can be expressed by: (a) directly referencing a precoordinated concept with anatomical location (*lkb:referencesConcept*); or (b) using the relationship *lkb:referencesLocationConcept* to specify the anatomical location. This improves interoperability across triple stores and facilitates mapping to domain-specific terminologies such as the FMA following Linked Data principles. Other studies have explored using

Fig. 5. Query architecture on the graph Data Base.

Linked Data to increase the interoperability of data reuse frameworks such as OHDSI [\[54](#page-20-12)]. However, the use of Linked Data was focused on mappings from the internal terminologies of the framework to more interoperable ones such as UMLS and HPO. Conversely, our work focused on direct ontology learning from free text, focusing on the accuracy and correct taxonomic classification of the identified entities. Also, Banda et al. [\[55](#page-20-13)] used Machine Learning to learn phenotypes from imperfect labeled data, but it was done by reading over the OHDSI CDM v5 structured model rather than free text. They constrained the XPRESS model [\[56](#page-20-14)] to operate only over standard terms rather than free text [\[55](#page-20-13)]. The work closest to ours in terms of mapping text to an ontology is the study of Hammami et al. [[34\]](#page-19-32), which used a rule-based system to map pathology reports in Italian to the International Classification of Diseases for Oncology (ICD-O-M). Hammami and colleagues dealt with classifying concepts into the ICD-O-M using rules to prioritize morphology descriptions. However, the ontology produced was not formalized into a logic model allowing the execution of phenotyping queries.

5.3. Limitations

Our method allows us to process free text notes directly and define phenotypes to filter radiology reports using various terminologies. However, phenotypes are as diverse as the natural language contained in reports, and our methods have several limitations regarding the expressivity they can achieve.

First, Deep Phenotyping requires not only the specification of clinical concepts but also the interpretation of temporal constraints and demographic data in free text. Our methodology does not deal with these features. That challenge would require the development of temporal NLP models in addition to the ones presented [\[57](#page-20-15)], which remain as future work.

Second, the methods presented are not a complete clinical research platform such as i2b2 or OHDSI that can define more precise phenotypes (e.g., with temporal constraints) at the expense of intensive ETL and data curation efforts. Instead, the methodology presented is intended to query large volumes of clinical reports for assigning them to clinical studies with minimum ETL efforts. Once radiology reports have been retrieved by running phenotyping queries with the patterns presented, each study can decide to normalize clinical report data further into clinical research platforms for further analysis.

Third, our methodology alleviates most of the effort in ETL tasks. However, the functionality of our method is limited to answering queries for detecting clinical reports with the patterns specified. That is, the phenotyping criteria that can be processed are limited by the completeness of the LKB in expressing the contents of free text reports. Dealing with more expressive criteria would require the NLP pipeline to be enhanced to detect more complex relationships and then translate those to the LKB as logic constructs. Nevertheless, the management of clinical reports and the phenotyping queries supported suffice the needs of BIMCV regarding indexing and fast processing of reports. This is aligned with the findings of Sholle et al. [\[58](#page-20-16)], who reported that only 15% of phenotyping queries required more than three conditions or custom temporal constraints. Hence, we believe our method can be reliably used directly in various use cases, such as image and pathology banks, as long as representative corpora are developed.

Finally, including more domain-specific terminologies, such as RadLex [\[59](#page-20-17)], can enhance interoperability and cross-terminological phenotyping queries. However, in the context of public healthcare in Spain, RadLex is not used. Thus, its adoption remains as future work.

6. Conclusions

EHRs contain large amounts of free text. This study presented a methodology that leverages the use of transformer-based NLP methods with Linked Data Technologies to enable Deep Phenotyping on clinical reports. Our phenotyping system was evaluated on the Spanish Chest+COVID dataset showing state-of-the-art results for the NLP task and effectively supporting expressive phenotyping queries. The performance of the multi-label classification module was very satisfactory to reinforce Deep Phenotyping, achieving a micro averaging of 0.950, a macro averaging of 0.691, and a weighted average of 0.949. To answer Deep Phenotyping queries, 12 terminologies were mapped and expressed in compliance with Linked Data principles as a LKB

that effectively processed equivalence and subsumption relationships. Subsequent work will involve incorporating temporal evolution into the NLP module and extending our NLP-LKB system to other domains. Additionally, it would be interesting to have a gold standard to carry out a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the benefits of the complete system. The results could show, for example, the relationship between the errors in the labeling phase from the medical reports in terms of the CUIs labels and the results of the phenotyping queries. The study also notes the rising interest in cross-lingual knowledge transfer strategies for low-resource languages [[60–](#page-20-18)[62\]](#page-20-19) and in Biomedical or Medical entity linking [\[63](#page-20-20)[–65](#page-20-21)], with an exploration of these strategies identified as a direction for future work.

Finally, Chest+COVID is a publicly open dataset, and our intention is to make the corpus publicly available to adhere to FAIR principles [[43\]](#page-20-1). This step aligns with EU recommendations on Open Science [[44\]](#page-20-2) by indexing our results in the European Open Science Cloud and the Linking Open Data Cloud.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Lluís-F. Hurtado: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Luis Marco-Ruiz:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Encarna Segarra:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Maria Jose Castro-Bleda:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Aurelia Bustos-Moreno:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Maria de la Iglesia-Vayá:** Writing – original draft, Resources, Project administration, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Juan Francisco Vallalta-Rueda:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Validation, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Data curation, Conceptualization.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare not having any conflict of interest.

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Appendix A. Experimental results

Results for each label on the Test set, in terms of true positives (tp), false positives (fp), false negatives (fn), Precision (P), Recall (R), F1-score, and Support (S).

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Appendix B. Ad hoc mappings

Appendix C. Phenotyping queries

Query 1-Retrieve all radiologic reports that contain a Pleural effusion in the left lung

```
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
PREFIX fma: <http://purl.org/sig/ont/fma/>
PREFIX hp: <http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/hp#>
SELECT distinct ?report
WHERE {
 ?report a sct:Report .
 ?report sct:referencesConcept* ?pleuralEffusion .
 ?report sct:referencesLocationConcept* ?leftLung .
 ?leftLung rdfs:subClassOf* fma:7310 .
 ?pleuralEffusion rdfs:subClassOf* hp:0002113
}
```
Query 2-Retrieve reports mentioning a pattern of infiltration in a bronchopulmonary segment structure.

```
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
```

```
PREFIX hp: <http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/hp#>
SELECT distinct ?report
WHERE {
 ?report a sct:Report .
 ?report sct:referencesConcept* ?radiologicInfiltrate .
 ?radiologicInfiltrate rdfs:subClassOf* hp:0002113 .#radiologic infiltrate
 ?report sct:referencesLocationConcept* ?bronchopulmonarySegment .
 ?bronchopulmonarySegment rdfs:subClassOf* sct:72674008 .#bronshopulmonary segment structure
}
```
Query 3 - Retrieve patient identifier of patients with a radiological finding related to a Widened mediastinum.

```
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
SELECT distinct ?patientId
WHERE {
 ?report a sct:Report .
 ?report sct:referencesToPatient ?patientId .
 ?report sct:referencesConcept* ?widenedMediastinum .
 ?widenedMediastinum rdfs:subClassOf* sct:363646005 .
}
```
Query 4 - Retrieve all reports with radiological findings related to the mediastinum

```
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
SELECT distinct ?report ?radiologicFinding
WHERE {
 ?report a sct:Report .
 ?report sct:referencesConcept* ?radiologicFinding .
 ?radiologicFinding rdfs:subClassOf* sct:118247008 .
 ?report sct:referencesLocationConcept* ?mediastinum .#mediastinum
  ?mediastinum rdfs:subClassOf* umls:C0025066 .#sct:72410000#
}
Query 5 - Retrieve all radiolofy reports related to images with catheter
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
SELECT distinct ?report
WHERE {
 ?report a sct:Report .
 ?report sct:referencesConcept* ?catheter .
 ?catheter rdfs:subClassOf* sct:19923001 .
}
Query 6 - Retrieve reports related to fractures in the region of the shoulder
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
PREFIX fma: <http://purl.org/sig/ont/fma/>
SELECT distinct ?report ?fracture
WHERE {
```

```
?report a sct:Report .
```

```
?report sct:referencesConcept* ?fracture .
 ?fracture rdfs:subClassOf* umls:C0016658 .
 ?report sct:referencesLocationConcept* ?shoulder .
 ?shoulder rdfs:subClassOf* fma:25202.
}
```
Query 7 - Retrieve patient identifiers where nodules of lung were found

```
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
PREFIX fma: <http://purl.org/sig/ont/fma/>
PREFIX icd10: <http://https://uts-ws.nlm.nih.gov/rest/content/2022AA/source/ICD10AM#>
PREFIX hp: <http://purl.obolibrary.org/obo/hp#>
SELECT distinct ?patientId ?nodulesFinding
WHERE {
 ?report a sct:Report .
 ?report sct:referencesToPatient ?patientId .
 ?report sct:referencesConcept* ?nodulesFinding .
 ?nodulesFinding rdfs:subClassOf* hp:0033608 .
```

```
}
```
Query 8 - Retrieve all reports making references to atelectasis and its subtypes

```
PREFIX rdfs: <http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#>
PREFIX rdf: <http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#>
PREFIX sct: <http://www.ehealthresearch.no/2022/snomedct-lite#>
PREFIX umls: <https://uts.nlm.nih.gov/uts/umls/concept/>
PREFIX fma: <http://purl.org/sig/ont/fma/>
PREFIX icd10: <http://https://uts-ws.nlm.nih.gov/rest/content/2022AA/source/ICD10AM#>
SELECT distinct ?report ?someTypeOfAtelactasis
WHERE {
 ?report a sct:Report .
 ?report sct:referencesConcept* ?someTypeOfAtelactasis .
```

```
?someTypeOfAtelactasis rdfs:subClassOf*icd10:J98_1.
```

```
}
```
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