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# OMERACT 8 — 8th International Consensus Conference on Outcome Measures in Rheumatology Clinical Trials

OMERACT is an informal international network of health professionals that organizes meetings focused on outcome measurement across randomized controlled trials and longitudinal observational studies. OMERACT strives to improve outcome measures through a data-driven, iterative consensus process. OMERACT has a 5 member Executive Committee, with members from 3 continents, as well as a 15 member Scientific Advisory Committee composed of international opinion leaders from 9 countries.

We have started a third global cycle since 1992. We started in The Netherlands, visited Canada, Australia (twice), Mexico, France, the United States, and now Malta: a piece of European soil that was hotly contested in the last 2000 years. In a sunny week in May 2006, it became a place known not only for crusades and holy wars, but also for evidence-based battles followed by compromise and consensus, in true OMERACT style.

The executive has been slightly overwhelmed with the sheer scope of activities growing under the OMERACT umbrella. Twenty-two separate high quality activities took place, with a nice mix of “generic-measurement methodology” and “disease oriented” topics. Under the leadership of numerous (co-)chairs, 22 groups worked hard to present the science discussed at the conference.

The growth of OMERACT means adaptation and change. OMERACT 8 saw both the small special interest group meetings and the large workshops run in parallel.

Several special interest groups also participated in a plenary “Superworkshop” by providing input from their specialized area into the generic concept of surrogate endpoints. With EULAR’s support, the fellows/young researchers were back, attending a special preconference training day on outcome measurement before joining the other participants. The fellows successfully counteracted the impression of greying or thinning hair-do’s more prevalent among some of our senior members.

OMERACT has always been an initiative built by the participants. The executive has decided to take this to a new level by initiating discussions on a new and more participatory structure of governance: a broadly based “OMERACT faculty” that will become the new Steering Committee. All current (co-)chairs as well as all participants attending at least 2 meetings and the Scientific Advisory Committee were invited to discuss this at a lunch meeting during the conference, and these discussions will continue.

Apart from clinician scientists, 2 groups of “end users” of consensus outcome measures deserve special mention: patients and Industry. Very early on, OMERACT recognized the need for input from patients. Patients have actively participated in OMERACT activities since 2000, preparing for the first special module that took place during OMERACT 6

(2002). We believe their input is essential to decide on the right measurement tools, and their dedication to the process is an example for us all.

OMERACT has always sought constructive engagement with Industry. Industry supports OMERACT financially through a Business Advisory Committee. Corporate Members of this committee consult with the Executive on the agenda for the meetings, and send a limited number of delegate scientists to each meeting. In this way we hope that the consensus reached on outcome measures also includes measurement concerns raised from that perspective, and in turn that recommendations are rapidly taken up in trial design.

Some things do not change: all activities were participatory and interactive. Its outcome was unknown until the end: the conference site enabled hard work, but also fun. The conference proceedings will be printed in 4 installments in the coming issues of *The Journal of Rheumatology*, and be freely available for download through a link on our website: [www.omeract.org](http://www.omeract.org).

Part 1, featured in this issue, focuses on Biomarkers and Surrogate Endpoints, the activities that took place in and around the Superworkshop mentioned above. Part 2, Imaging, continues on this topic, while grouping together all the articles on imaging. Part 3, Outcome Measures, features articles on the core set of measures for psoriatic arthritis and measurement of fatigue in rheumatoid arthritis, as well as several reports from special interest groups. Part 4, Workshops and Special Interest Groups closes this cycle of OMERACT with reports of the Vasculitis, Fibromyalgia, and Drug Safety Workshops, plus the remaining special interest groups. Please enjoy!

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