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May 27–31, 2008

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OMERACT is an informal international network of health professionals interested in outcome measurement across the spectrum of rheumatology intervention studies. OMERACT strives to improve endpoint outcome measurement through a data-driven, iterative consensus process involving relevant stakeholder groups, who work together on task forces and meet at international gatherings.

The term OMERACT was originally established in 1992 to mean “Outcome Measures in Rheumatoid Arthritis Clinical Trials.” Since then the OMERACT initiative has turned into an international informal network. The acronym has been broadened to now stand for “Outcome Measures in Rheumatology.” Since the first OMERACT meeting was held in The Netherlands 16 years ago, we have circled the globe 8 times and achieved successes that were previously only dreamed of. This year’s conference at the secluded Rocky Mountain Lodge, Kananaskis Village, Alberta, provided the perfect atmosphere for the collegial, interactive, and lively discussions that have characterized OMERACT from its inception.

The OMERACT Executive is delighted at the growth and respect that OMERACT has gained over the years. However, with this unyielding expansion has come the need for creative solutions to the rapid growth caused by this success. One such change is the expansion of the leadership to include a 25-member Steering Group who consult regularly with the executive on difficult issues such as the future structure of OMERACT. Based on their recommendations, OMERACT 9 was restructured to include one module, 4 workshops, and 7 special interest groups meeting at the conference. In addition to these groups, another 7 special interest groups working parallel to the conference presented an update on their progress over the past 2 years.

OMERACT 9 also saw an interesting blend of methods and conditions:

A. Methods
OMERACT Core Sets relevant to more than one condition:
1. Biomarkers and Surrogate Endpoints
   a. Soluble Biomarkers
   b. Synovial Tissue Markers
   c. Imaging
      i. MRI
      ii. RA Radiographic Repair / Joint Space Narrowing
      iii. Ultrasound
2. Economic Evaluation: Indirect Estimates of QALY’s
3. Hip and Knee Arthroplasty
4. International Classification of Function
5. Item Response Theory and Computer Adaptive Testing
6. Patient Perspective
   a. Fatigue
   b. Psychosocial Measures
   c. Sleep
   d. Effective Consumer Scale
7. Single-joint Response
8. Virtual Total Articular Replacement
9. Work Productivity
10. Drug Safety

B. Disease/Condition-specific:
1. Fibromyalgia Core Set
2. Flares in Rheumatoid Arthritis
3. Gout Core Set
4. Systemic Sclerosis Core Set
5. Vasculitis Core Set

With the support of both the European League Against Rheumatism and the American College of Rheumatology, the immensely successful fellows program was able to run a third time. We expanded this program at OMERACT 9 to provide young researchers with more new and exciting opportunities to get involved, including a special preconference training day on outcome measurement, poster presentations, and daily fellow discussion forums. These fellows are the future of OMERACT researchers and we are very impressed by their enthusiastic contributions.

Apart from researchers and clinicians, end-user groups are also an integral part of the OMERACT family. From very early on the contributions of both industry and patients in the process were seen as invaluable. Industry supports OMERACT financially through a contribution to the Business Advisory Committee, which serves as a consultation platform; however, the program for OMERACT meetings is decided by the Steering Group. It is hoped that through the productive engagement with industry, outcome measures and concerns raised by the working groups will be taken up in trial design by our industry partners. Patients have been actively involved in OMERACT activities since 2000. Their input is essential to decide on the right measurement tools, and their dedication to the process is an example for us all.

OMERACT 9 was another great success thanks to the hard work and dedication of all involved, especially the group leaders who worked relentlessly to put it all together.
We invite you to read the conference proceedings, which will be published in 3 instalments in the coming issues of The Journal, and will also be freely accessible via the OMERACT Website at www.omeract.org

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OMERACT 9: International Consensus Conference on Outcome Measures in Rheumatology

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