

Introduction

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The Journal of Rheumatology is a monthly international serial edited by Earl D. Silverman featuring research articles on clinical subjects from scientists working in rheumatology and related fields.

OMERACT 12 — International Consensus Conference on Outcome Measures in Rheumatology

The Outcome Measures in Rheumatology (OMERACT), an international organization, continues to evolve while staying committed to its founding ideals of being the focus for the development of well-validated outcome measures for randomized controlled trials and longitudinal observational studies. While the showcase of OMERACT is the biennial conference, the work continues year in and year out, conducted by individual working group members who are the engine for this organization, which provides a global focus for a data-driven, patient-inclusive consensus process.

The OMERACT 12 meeting was held in Budapest, Hungary, in May 2014 and displayed the efforts of 22 working groups, with 6 of these presenting in a workshop format (with breakout groups and plenary votes seeking endorsement of outcomes) and the rest as special interest groups (shorter sessions aimed at informing and endorsing the direction of working group projects). These working groups presented a broad portfolio of relevant research in 3 themed areas: disease-specific areas (including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, osteoarthritis, vasculitis, and connective tissue diseases), imaging and biomarkers (including magnetic resonance imaging and ultrasound), and methodology and cross-cutting themes (including pain, worker productivity, and understanding minimum important differences through Rasch analysis).

Patients have been integral partners in the OMERACT process since the first meeting held in 1992, and they were, yet again, highly central to the Budapest meeting. The provision of some financial support and the inclusion of a patient representative in the OMERACT Executive in the last few years have been part of the process of cementing this relationship.

Pain is highly important to most people with rheumatological conditions. As well as having a special interest group meeting on this topic, a preconference meeting was held to increase focus on this still under-studied complex area and to stimulate potential new working groups and collaborations [with organizations including ACTION/IMPACT (Analgesic, Anesthetic, and Addiction Clinical Trial Translations, Innovations, Opportunities, and Networks/Initiative on Methods, Measurement, and Pain Assessment in Clinical Trials), COMET (Core Outcome Measures in Effectiveness Trials), and COSMIN (CONsensus-based Standards for the selection of health Measurement INSTRuments)]. The meeting brought together a broad range of pain experts, exploring issues such as the patient-important

outcomes to be used in Cochrane summary of findings tables, and even debating whether chronic pain should be considered a disease in its own right.

OMERACT 12 saw the further evolution of the OMERACT Filter 2.0, with its expansion from the original filter focused on tool development, to the development of core outcome measurement sets starting with the appropriate stakeholder group inclusion and development of core domain sets. Much of this work was led by Professor Maarten Boers to whom we owe a great debt of thanks, and by Professor John Kirwan.

As well, the development of the OMERACT Handbook, which contains both methodological and organizational information [currently available on the OMERACT website (www.omeract.org)], has facilitated this process. The Handbook (which will undergo iterative development in the years to come) should provide a major reference resource for all those interested in outcome measure development.

The Budapest meeting also saw the continuation of the well-received OMERACT Fellows program, as well as the program for new attendees (or “Newbies”), to help newcomers understand OMERACT and its meeting processes.

Many people contributed to the organization and successful delivery of the OMERACT 12 meeting, and we thank in particular Ms. Valorie Thompson and Ms. Shawna Grosskleg for their hard work behind the scenes. We would also like to sincerely thank the members of the Business Advisory Committee and our sponsors, as industry not only provides a relevant partner in our discussions, but also provides financial support to OMERACT.

These OMERACT meetings deliberately remain restricted in size to enable small group discussion and extensive interaction between groups, while maintaining the ambiance of a true multidisciplinary, collaborative, friendly yet rigorous process of evaluating outcome measure development. OMERACT 12 was reduced in duration, in response to feedback from previous participants. OMERACT continues to have challenges, and as success has expanded interest in the organization, there are more working groups than can be included in 1 conference, and difficult decisions are required to work out whose work is at a suitable point for presentation. As OMERACT further evolves, we may need to explore involving working groups in new ways, such as through Web-based or virtual meetings.

Lastly, we would like to acknowledge the massive contributions of 3 members who have recently stepped down from

the OMERACT Executive: Professors Peter Brooks, Maarten Boers, and John Kirwan. All brought unique expert skills matched with driving enthusiasm for good science, openness, and inclusivity, features that characterize the spirit of OMERACT.

We invite all interested researchers to consider participating in an OMERACT working group and attending the next meeting, to be held in Whistler, British Columbia, Canada, in May 2016.

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The OMERACT conferences are possible only through the ongoing commitment of the chairs and their working groups, to whom we are grateful. A special thank you goes to Valorie Thompson and Andrea Speckin (Innovations Consulting Group) for organizing the logistics and running the conference. A special thank you also goes to Shawna Grosskleg of the OMERACT Secretariat for her ongoing support in many roles. Outside the Executive, special thanks go to Drs Victor Sloan and Christoph Pohl for help with the "Newbies" program, and very special thanks to Professor Francis Guillemain for his help in animating the Fellows program.

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**Articles presented at the OMERACT 12 Conference,
Budapest, Hungary, May 7-11, 2014**

- Part 1: Pre-conference Meeting
- Part 2: Working Groups
- Part 3: Special Interest Groups I
- Part 4: Special Interest Groups II

Part 2 will appear in the November issue.