

Domain definition templates at OMERACT

Why are definitions so important?

Clear definitions are important for each domain in a core domain set. They tell us exactly what we mean when we say “physical function“ for example. They tell us what a good instrument must include and target. At OMERACT we use these definitions at the beginning of the instrument selection process in checking content validity. The domain definition template was designed to help you dig into the meaning of your chosen domain and to make a record of that for future reference. We will also collect these and encourage working groups to see if some other group has already developed a definition that perhaps matches yours.

What is your (target) domain?

You have a domain. Say “pain“ but on further reflection is it really the impact of pain on someone’s life activities. That is the real target. Try to make that clear. This is the focus of what we want to measure. The broader domain is a general term or description of the concept. Some examples:

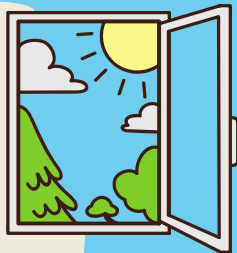
- Synovitis is part of the broader domain of Inflammation.
- Fatigue impact on life is part of the broader domain of Fatigue

Tell us more about that domain.

Think of a domain like a window in a house. It’s location and size tell us what we are able to see through it. What view do you want to see? What are the boundaries of that (high/low levels, breadth)? What is included or excluded from your domain (view)? In imaging and clinical outcomes this might be getting to the elements that you will see – is hypo-echoic signal on US, or isokinetic muscle strength?

Take advantage of other definitional work done by other working groups or definitions of the same domain in a conceptual framework. No harm in sharing if it is the same!

Double win! all this information will be easily uploaded into Delphi survey software for your consensus work on domains.



How did you know about this domain and what it means?

As you create your definition statement in the previous step you are likely thinking about the sources of that definition – an article, illustrative quotes from patients, discussions of the working group. Write these down now so you have that richness years from now. This will help anyone trying to understand your domain.



It all depends....

The responses or scores we get on an instrument might depend on a number of factors. My mobility might depend on whether I was using my cane that morning. Or my imaging results depend on what type of MRI machine was at that centre. These Measurement-Affecting contextual factors are things that will likely have come up as you learned more about your domain and worked on its definition. We suggest you start tracking these in the “Sources of variability“ section of the template. You will need them later in instrument selection.



Which core area?

At OMERACT we ask you to make sure you have considered including domains across the spectrum of disease expression and experience. We ask that you consider representing each of the four core areas of Pathophysiological Manifestations, Life Impact, Adverse effects (including death) and Resource Use (optional) in identifying your Core Domain Set. Each domain will fit in one of these four broad “buckets“. Add this to your definitional template

