Distributed Health Data Networks: Implementing a Scalable Query Interface within PopMedNet for Use in Large-Scale Diverse Networks

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**Objective**

Demonstrate a new architecture and framework for an extensible point-and-click query interface in PopMedNetTM (PMN) that:

- Addresses challenges in platform and software heterogeneity in PCORnet, the largest PMN network
- Are modularized and can successfully target multiple data models and various technical ecosystems
- Utilize widely adopted standard data exchange formats e.g. JSON, LINQ, Microsoft Entity Framework, and SQL
- Produce consistent and valid results
Background

- PMN powers clinical and observational research through efficient and privacy-preserving methods and technologies.
- PMN infrastructure permits investigators to compose and distribute custom queries through a variety of tools.
- PMN is a mature platform that is used by 100s of organizations.
- PMN is used in several large-scale distributed data networks including: PCORI’s PCORnet and FDA’s Sentinel Initiative.
Problems Identified with the Initial MDQ Tool

Legacy Query Composer: Developed for limited use resulting in scalability issues:

- Each query tool was hardcoded for use against a single CDM and database platform
  - The MDPHnet network’s ESP data model and PostgreSQL
  - FDA’s Sentinel System Summary Table data model and MS Access

- Changes required manual and redundant hard-coding

- Queryable terms could not be shared across networks (e.g. if 2 networks wanted to query race data, each query tool needed to be developed separately, even if the field names and value sets were the same)

- Changes required the sites to download a new version of the PMN DataMart Client software in order to respond to a query
Challenge: Develop a One Size Fits All MDQ Tool

- End users want a simple query tool interface and workflow
- Infrastructure should be re-usable and easily extensible and scalable, limiting CDM-specific coding
- Address the heterogeneity of technical environments across the large-scale distributed networks PMN supports
- Consider workflows for full request lifecycle including integration points with external systems
Request Cycle

1. Investigator creates and submits query to selected sites
2. Individual sites retrieve query
3. Sites review and run query directly against the CDM via the PMN DataMart Client
4. Sites review results
5. Individual site returns results via secure network
6. Requestor views results in PMN Portal

Users have options to receive query notifications throughout cycle

Challenges to Consider:

**Primary source data:** refresh rates vary across sites, ETL processes may vary

**CDM:** Could be 1 of many approved CDM versions

**RDBMS:** Could be 1 of many supported database systems and versions of the RDBMS

**Technical environment:** DMC is Windows app, data may live in a Linux/Unix & involve manual processes to query data
Tools Developed

Menu-Driven Queries (MDQs):
- PMN interface supports querying terms and stratifications
- Investigators can compose a simple or complex MDQ that includes logical operators “OR”, “AND”, “AND NOT” to define a cohort of interest via a user interface
- Include software-enabled governance to determine what users can query
- Support electronic workflows and embedded analytics
- Include data model adapters that make the MDQs Common Data Model (CDM) aware
- Modular design for sharing queryable terms regardless of data source

Test Case Inserter (TCI):
- Generates databases according to CDM specifications
- Custom program that enables users to easily insert synthetic data into a relational database management system (RDBMS) without requiring the user to have SQL programming skills
- Supports MDQ validation and MDQ prototypes for targeting new data sources
One Size fits Most* MDQ Tool

*Committed to support the most common RDMBS versions used across PCORnet

Single MDQ Tool
Menu-Driven Query Process

1. Distribute Request to Data Partners
2. Transfer Request & Response Between Requestor & Data Partner(s)
3. DataMart Admin Review and Run Query
4. ORACLE
5. Investigator / Analyst Downloads Request Responses from Each Data Partner

Investigator/Coordinating Center

*DP = Data Partner

Data Partner N

Data Analysis

DP #1 Results
DP #N Results

DataMart Client (DMC)
MDQ Technical Details and Validation

MDQs are currently enabled to query terms and fields found in many data models. Data partners download the PMN DataMart Client (DMC) application and configure it to match their data model, as well as connect it to their local RDBMS.

The TCI tool generates data sets and databases that match any given Common Data Model (CDM). TCI then inserts the data into a supported RDBMS.

RDBMS Platforms Tested
- Oracle 11, 12
- Postgres 9.4, 9.5, 9.6

MDQs are currently developed to match the PCORnet CDM. Non-PCORnet data sources can utilize MDQs if they share concepts e.g. PCORnet uses DX_TYPE and Sentinel uses DX_CODETYPE to represent diagnosis code type.

Data Sources

TCI
MDQ Use Case

How many patients with high cholesterol and high blood pressure but do not have heart failure?

Use MDQ to find patients of interest. Terms are added to the PMN MDQ interface according to the data model. Terms can be re-purposed for other data models.
Query Interface to Define Cohort

Criteria Group 1: Hypertension with visits between 2000-2016
Query Interface to Define Cohort

Criteria Group: Cholesterol

Group Name*
Cholesterol

Exclusion Criteria

Criteria Group 2:
AND patients have high cholesterol

Diagnosis

Code Set: ICD-9-CM
Search Method: "Exact Match"
Selected Codes: 2720
Query Interface to Define Cohort

Criteria Group 3: AND patients without heart failure

Criteria Group: Heart disease w/out heart failure

Group Name:
Heart disease w/out heart failure

Exclusion Criteria

Diagnosis

Code Set: ICD-9-CM
Search Method: "Exact Match"
Selected Codes: 40200
DataMart Administrator Receives the Query

DataMart Administrator Inbox – locally installed app at each site

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DataMart Administrator Reviews Query Details

Administrator can review query input

Request JSON transmitted from the web portal to the DMC can also be viewed by users
Once request is run locally, the LINQ generated SQL is also available to the user.

This is the database agnostic query language that is then translated into a specific SQL flavor by the RDBMS service provider.
DataMart Administrator Uploads Results

...and send results back to the requestor if they choose to...
MDQ Results:
Patients with hypertension diagnosis with visits between 2000-2016
AND patients have high cholesterol ICD-9 diagnosis codes
AND patients without heart failure diagnosis codes
Current Status

- Multiple filters and stratification options have been added to the MDQ tool for several fields including Race, Sex, Observation Period, Diagnosis and Procedure Codes, Height, Weight, Age, etc., more planned.

- The PCORnet data adapter has been updated to process queries with the new terms and stratification options.

- Testing with the TCI tool has verified that ad hoc data models that share PCORnet CDM fields can use the MDQ out-of-the-box, continuing to explore how to leverage the work for other data models.
Current Status

- Enhancing automation functionality
- Preparing to add functionality for users to define index events
- Validation and performance testing is in progress to evaluate how complex queries behave
- Ability to expose the actual SQL to a user prior to running a query is under investigation. The request JSON and the LINQ code are currently available to end users but require manual steps to piece the query languages together, for example:
Current Status

-- PrimaryObservationStart: '10/15/2013 12:00:00 AM' (Type = DateTime2, IsNullable = false)
-- PrimaryObservationEnd: '10/14/2014 12:00:00 AM' (Type = DateTime2)
-- CriteriaOneCodeType: '09' (Type = String, Size = 4000)
-- CriteriaOneMinimumAge: '65' (Type = Int32, IsNullable = false)

```
SELECT 1 AS [C1],
        [GroupBy1].[k1] AS [SEX],
        [GroupBy1].[k2] AS [HISPANIC],
        [GroupBy1].[k3] AS [RACE],
        [GroupBy1].[k4] AS [C1]
FROM (
    SELECT [Extent1].[SEX] AS [k1],
           COUNT(*) AS [A1]
    FROM [dbo].[DEMOGRAPHIC] AS [Extent1]
    WHERE (1111)
        EXISTS (SELECT 1 AS [C1]
                FROM [dbo].[ENCOUNTER] AS [Extent2]
                WHERE ((([Extent1].[PATID] = [Extent2].[PATID]) AND ([Extent2].[ADMIT_DATE] >= @PrimaryObservationStart) AND ([Extent2].[ADMIT_DATE] <= @PrimaryObservationEnd))
        )
) WHERE (1)
    AND (([Extent1].[PATID] = [Extent2].[PATID]) AND ([Extent2].[ADMIT_DATE] >= @PrimaryObservationStart) AND ([Extent2].[ADMIT_DATE] <= @PrimaryObservationEnd))
```

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Summary

- The MDQ tool includes a point and click, scalable query interface that supports complex logic for users to define cohorts of interest (e.g. medical codes, date ranges) for use in distributed queries.

- MDQs can be executed in various technical ecosystems.

- The tool is modularized, enabling functionality to be database-agnostic and can be run against multiple RDBMS platforms without custom programming as it utilizes widely adopted data exchange formats.
MDQ testing and validation process has been implemented and has shown consistent, valid results across database platforms; this process has informed tool development and continuous enhancements.

Over 4,300 unique MDQ-to-site requests have been submitted within PCORnet, a DDN, since early 2016.

The tool is helping to close gaps by creating more opportunities for investigators to ask research questions more easily, flexibly, and rapidly within their DDNs while adhering to their local governance and technology policies.

Work continues to improve the MDQ tool in ways that will enable even more scalability in designing re-usable query interfaces and electronic workflows.
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Thank you!

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