



## HANDOUT: IMPROVING DATA QUALITY AS A CLINICAL OBSERVER

- **Clear definitions**—Ensure that the terms are clearly defined and you, as an observer, understand the relevant terms.
- **Pre-tested tools**—Confirm with your supervisor that tools have been pre-tested, or be involved in pre-testing as part of your orientation to using this tool.
- **Precision and detail**—Pay attention to precision/detail. Data should have sufficient detail (e.g., notes in comment boxes).
- **Objectivity**—Tools are designed to measure OBJECTIVE data. “Objective” means not influenced by personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudice; based on facts; or unbiased, as in “an objective measure.”
- **Standard tools/methods**—Ensure tools and methods are standardized. Data collection methods must ensure that subjects are observed in the same way.
- **Translation**—Ensure tools have been translated appropriately; try back translation to ensure original intent is captured.
- **Completeness**—The complete set of data includes all units / eligible persons or sites and not just a fraction of the list.
- **Timeliness**—Data are timely when they are up-to-date (current) and when the information is available on time and provides measurement at time intervals relevant and appropriate in terms of program goals and activities (such as a monthly reporting form or quarterly reports capturing data from previous months).
- **Legibility**—Ensure your answers are legible for other persons to read and interpret and for use in data entry.

### Common Data-Collection Errors

- **Missing/unreadable data**—Either data are missing on the tool or the data are illegible.
- **Data entered incorrectly**—The observer hits the wrong key on an electronic device, selects the wrong box, or is unfamiliar with the tool.
- **Delay in data entry**—Time passes between data collection and entry, leading to errors.
- **Misunderstanding about when “Not applicable” or “Don’t know” can be used**—“Not applicable” is marked when it should not be, or an entry is left blank when it should have been completed.