Creating Markup Tables with the `mutable` Package (Version 0.0-1)

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1 What is `mutable`?

`mutable` is:

- An R package to create statistical tables (μ table)

- Tables are completely user-defined, and easily changed to meet the user's exact needs

- Tables can be exported to several different markup languages

2 How does `mutable` differ from all the other table packages?

There are already several packages on CRAN that generate tables. Several of these even generate markup so that you can display the resulting table in LaTeX or HTML.

2.1 Hmisc

Perhaps the most famous of these functions are contained in the `Hmisc` package, through the `summary.formula` and `latex` functions. I have used these functions for a long time to generate LaTeX tables for my statistical reports. They have served me and countless others very well, and will continue to do so.

However, I continually ran into problems when the output wasn't just as I had hoped. There are `latex` methods for the objects created by `summary.formula`. The general approach is to create an object using summary.formula, and then pass it to the latex function.

There are literally dozens of parameters to the latex function, many of which control some small piece of the resulting latex output. For example, there is a first.hline.double parameter to control the placment of a horizontal line, and helvetica to control the default font used in the table.

The main issue with this approach is that LaTeX tables can be configured to a very fine degree, and introducing a new parameter every time you want to change a small bit of output was a painstaking process.

Another issue related to the first was that I could not obtain an R object with a representation of the LaTeX code that would be written out to a file upon calling the latex function. If this were available, I could have finely tuned the LaTeX code 'by hand' as it were, without introducing new parameters to the latex function.

More substantial changes to the output required even more challenging procedures. When dealing with categorical variables, I find it useful to prohibit pagebreaks in the middle of the levels of the variable. Adding this functionality required tracking down the appropriate places in the function to make the change, and then hoping that it didn't break anything else.

In short, these functions take an omnibus approach to generating markup. If you want to alter the resulting markup code, you have to dig into the function or introduce a new parameter.

2.2   How does mutable fix this?

The mutable package takes a very modular, function-based approach to generating markup tables. Instead of defining and setting lots of parameters to control the final output, you pass small, user-defined functions to generate each part of the markup. In general, the user makes one call to mutable for each column of the resulting table.

For example, the following simple table was generated with mutable.

```
> pead.bl <- data.frame(hiv = sample(c("Positive",
+     "Negative"), 100, replace = TRUE), age = rnorm(100,
+     c(50, 40), sd = 10), gender = sample(c("Male",
+     "Female"), 100, replace = TRUE), diffs = rnorm(100,
+     500, sd = 100), inc4x = sample(c("Yes", "No"),
+     100, replace = TRUE), bmi = rnorm(100, 30,
+     sd = 2))
> label(pead.bl$hiv) <- "HIV Status"
> label(pead.bl$age) <- "Age"
> label(pead.bl$gender) <- "Gender"
> label(pead.bl$diffs) <- "V2 GMT - V1 GMT"
> label(pead.bl$inc4x) <- "$\\frac{V1 GMT}{V2 GMT} >= 4$"
> label(pead.bl$bmi) <- "BMI"
```

We define a table by calling mutable once for each column. We combine columns into single table object with the '+' operator. We need a formula and a data.frame, which will proprogate from the first column to subsequent columns if they are not specified by further columns.

Each column needs a summary.function, and functions to generate the markup. There are defaults for these. Finally, the colname argument must be specified.

Variable	Combined Categories	Positive	Negative	P-value
Age	40.3 / 47.1 / 52.1	39.8 / 47 / 52.9	40.8 / 47.2 / 51.6	0.69
Gender				0.86
Female	57% 57/100	59% 30/51	55% 27/49	
Male	43% 43/100	41% 21/51	45% 22/49	
V2 GMT - V1 GMT	440.5 / 496.9 / 560.1	441.4 / 493 / 570	442.2 / 499.8 / 557.3	0.77
$\frac{V1GMT}{V2GMT} >= 4$				0.42
No	52% 52/100	47% 24/51	57% 28/49	
Yes	48% 48/100	53% 27/51	43% 21/49	
BMI	28.7 / 30.2 / 31.2	28.6 / 30.4 / 31.6	28.8 / 30.2 / 31.2	0.91

Table 1: Baseline Table

```
> form <- hiv ~ age + gender + diffs + inc4x + bmi
> tab1 <- etable(form, data = pead.bl, colname = "Variable",
+     summary.function = erownames) + etable(colname = "Combined Categories") +
+     etable(subset = hiv == "Positive", colname = "Positive") +
+     etable(subset = hiv == "Negative", colname = "Negative") +
+     etable(summary.function = etest, colname = "P-value")
> latex(tab1, caption = "Baseline Table")
```