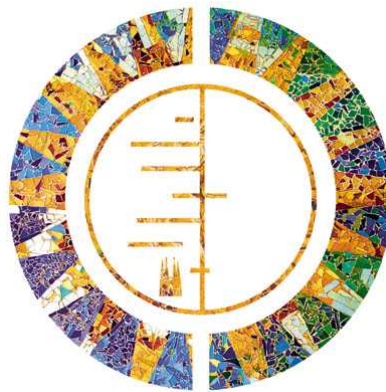


BARCELONA 2003

Final Report



**11th COCHRANE COLLOQUIUM:
Evidence, Health Care and Culture
October 26 – 31**

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1 – Colloquium Final Report

Date: October 26-31, 2003

Venue: Barcelona (Spain)

Organizing Center: Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre

Organizing members: 38

OPC: Viajes Iberia

Enrolment fee:

Type	Date	Full	Second part
Early	< 30-03-03	550 €	360 €
Full	< 30-06-03	630 €	420 €
Late	>30-06-03	700 €	460 €
On-site	>26-10-03	780 €	510 €

Profits/Expenses 653.032,84 € / 613.555,37 €

Visitors: Enrolled 869 / Accompanying persons 33 / Guests 72 / Organization 38

Obtained / Rejected Grants: 58.200 € / 310.000 €

Requested / Granted Consumer stipends 36/6

Requested / Granted Developing countries stipends 52 /18

Plenary sessions or conferences: 4 sessions, 3 conferences.

Parallel sessions: 4 methodology sessions (2*2), 12 clinical sessions (2*6), 10 general sessions (2*5)

Posters: 200

Workshops: 70

Meetings: 112 (scheduled in advance)

Recommendations

➔ The organizing staff in charge of future editions should be informed of the basic contents in the colloquium to simplify their job and allow for comparative work among the editions.

This basic information could be provided in:

- Final Colloquium report, including the assessment by the organizers
- Chronogram
- Enrolment fees and dates
- Distribution of enrolled participants by enrolment type and country
- Requested grants and their documents
- Conference economic report
- Results of the assessment survey
- Useful documentation (web page, sent submissions, model letters, etc.)
- List of speakers and potential speakers (particularly women and people from developing countries).
- List of workshops and convenors.

2- Colloquium Format

The Colloquium ideal format has been tried out in the last three editions (Lyon, Stavanger, Barcelona). The Lyon Colloquium combined the internal activities of the Collaboration with external activities open to researchers not involved with the Collaboration. The Stavanger Colloquium focused only on internal activities (training workshops and meetings). The Barcelona Colloquium was organized in two different parts: an internal part devoted to training Cochrane Collaboration (CC) members, and a second part open to people from other contexts and aimed mainly at discussion and exchange of ideas. The assessment survey included a question about the preferred Colloquium model (see specific section).

The ideal length of the Colloquium is related to format. The Barcelona edition lasted five days, plus the two previous days devoted to internal meetings (CCSG on Saturday and RCG/TSC on Sunday) and half a day after the edition (Debriefing Breakfast). Many people from the survey considered this length excessive, not only because of professional logistic difficulties but also because of the increased costs it presupposes.

Recommendations

- ➔ Despite the possibility of a selection bias (due to the type of attendant to the Stavanger Colloquium), the Stavanger format is the best consistently valued Colloquium format. To work out this option, an alternative format may be adopted by combining internal and external activity editions. The economic viability of this option should be assessed thoroughly.
- ➔ It is necessary to assess the length and cost of the Colloquium, both at the level of its organization and its participants.

3- Colloquium Planning

The date on which the Colloquium would be held was historically decided on the basis of the unjustified custom of the last term of the year or according to the holiday calendar in the different religions. Once the date was set, the moment in which we wanted the 11th Cochrane Colloquium celebration to go public was decided. The first actions to promote the edition were taken to make them effective both at the 9th Colloquium (Lyon - 2001) as well as at the 10th Colloquium (Stavanger - 2002). To this aim, the graphic design for the 11th Colloquium was defined and designed and posters were made, which together with a giant size photo of Barcelona were exhibited at Lyon's.

At Stavanger we also displayed a giant size photo and posters. Apart from the distribution of the first announcement book, the invitation cards and the announcement page included in the scientific program, the traditional presentation of the 11th Colloquium was given with an exhibition and a video of the city of Barcelona.

The preliminary program and schedule were then printed and mailed together with the cards and posters to the different Cochrane centers so that they would send them in turn to their collaborating members.

The 11th Cochrane Colloquium web page including the scientific and social information that would come up, as well as the announcements or news, was published.

In parallel with these actions, the Colloquium event was announced in different Internet sites, where national and international scientific events are announced, and in

medical journals and magazines; the celebration was also announced at every assembly and in the Iberoamerican Cochrane Center electronic bulletin.

After the Stavanger Colloquium, objectives were outlined and the different committees were established, especially those of an executive nature with the task of performing the necessary actions to attain the objectives set up at the 11th Cochrane Colloquium.

Recommendations

Generally:

→ To set the date for the Colloquium celebration, it is advisable to choose a time in which the change in costs for seasonal reasons is considered and in which there are more hotels available.

→ The organization of both local and international events that might interfere in or affect the attendance to a Colloquium celebration, because of proximity of dates, should be avoided as much as possible.

→ The delineation of objectives and the organization of executive committees should be done as soon as possible. The sooner the objectives are set, the earlier the organizational dynamics starts.

→ Mailings of printed advertising are very expensive and do not always guarantee that the material reaches the final recipient, particularly in developing countries. A rational use of e-mail is generally much more effective and the Web page becomes an optimal source since it is frequently visited by most of the interested parties in search of up-to-date information; however, the drawback is that it cannot attract new participants, given the need of developing an interest prior to its consultation.

The organizers of the current Colloquium should consider in advance the following points regarding the next Colloquium:

→ Room within the scientific program booklet for announcements of the next Colloquium.

→ Space to house a stand in which the organizers of the next Colloquium can exhibit their promotion material.

→ The appropriate timing and the allocation of enough time to give the presentation of the next Colloquium, thus ensuring a good exhibit with the maximum possible aid.

The organizers of the next Colloquium should:

→ Announce and publish as soon as possible contact sources and data to obtain information on the Colloquium.

→ Plan the type and amount of documentation and of announcements that are to be designed, so that they are prepared on time.

→ Prepare an original presentation of the next Colloquium to make it attractive to the participants of the current Colloquium.

4- Selection of OPC, venues and hotels

OPC

The company in charge of organizing conferences that gave support to the 11th Colloquium was selected among the three most important and more experienced companies working in the city. To this end, several interviews with companies working in the area were conducted, and they were asked to contribute with their experience in events with a similar number of participants, demonstrate their availability of resources and management skills, prove their knowledge on the area as to contacts, type of facilities used, solutions provided for specific problems, and finally to submit the most adjusted budget they could handle. The company that eventually got the highest score in the process was Viajes Iberia.

Before working jointly with the organizing company it was necessary to define the speakers for every part, the responsibilities and tasks to develop by each of them, and tell them about the objectives and limitations of a Cochrane Colloquium, since it is not a conventional conference and where it is relevant that budgeting should be carefully followed up. Interaction among the representatives of the organizing company and the Organizing Committee prior to the Colloquium was always characterized by maximum availability and support, both providing facilities and solutions for whatever problem came up. Unfortunately this was not the case to the same extent during and after the Colloquium.

VENUES

Originally, the 11th Colloquium was to be held at two different venues since, given the format of choice, a lower number of participants was expected on the first two days compared to the last days. The first part of the Colloquium could have been held at the Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre headquarters, which would have implied a lower budget at the expense of comfort and organization.

After this first idea was ruled out, it was decided to look for facilities specialized in conferences, which would guarantee an optimal level of comfort and professionalism. It was preferred that the venues were close to one another, and whenever possible, around the area of Montjuïc, a leisure area of the city, with public transport facilities, where it was possible to harmonize the different activities of the Colloquium with tourist activities of the participants. The Palau de Congressos of Barcelona and the Hotel Fira Palace were the chosen venues. Unfortunately, and due to the Iraq war first and to the SARS afterwards, the expected number of enrolled participants at the time of booking the Palau de Congressos was not enough to guarantee the economic coverage, which means that it was decided that the 11th Colloquium would be held entirely at the Hotel Fira Palace.

The choice for the Hotel Fira Palace came about because of its location in Montjuïc, the capacity and long experience of those in charge of the hotel to organize 1000-participant events and to the adjusted budget they submitted.

HOTELS

For the selection of hotels, factors such as proximity to the Colloquium venue and cost were considered. There are two options as to proximity, those who want to be as near as possible to the Colloquium venue and those who want to be in the downtown area with public transport to the Colloquium venue. With these points in mind, we tried to suit these two preferences with a variety of hotels ranging from 4 star hotels to actually economical students' hostels, with wider options for medium categories that often carry

the larger number of bookings. It was attempted that room and breakfast services were included in the price for all of these categories. The hotel reservation was requested to be paid in advance for the first night plus a proportional sum for the number of days for which the reservation was made.

Once selected, hotels nearer to the event were made sure to be available for chair bound participants. All the recommended hotels were visited with a wheelchair to make sure this requirement was met. In some of them it was confirmed that they formally met the legal requirements but the use of a wheelchair was difficult and uncomfortable. A parallel list of hotels was designed for people with mobility problems.

Recommendations

- ➔ It is important to guarantee that the company aiding in the organization of a Colloquium has the necessary skills to carry out all the previous tasks, during and after the Colloquium. In an attempt to gain the contract, companies usually impose a good image and work well during the first phases only to wane their performance later in the following phases. Therefore, it is highly advisable to contact any previous client to check the company's performance in the different phases of the project.
- ➔ Make sure the speaker appointed by the company to the Colloquium is an approachable and communicative person, with decision-making and executive skills. This facilitates the transactions a great deal.
- ➔ Request and approve budgets for each planned activity. Economic differences that appear after the Colloquium will be easier to clarify if budgets have been previously agreed on.
- ➔ Request new budgets for any change that might occur and avoid activities without a clear knowledge of the cost implied.
- ➔ Sign an agreement with the organizing company including clauses dealing with breaches of specified conditions of budgets.
- ➔ Make sure that the Colloquium venue has experience and capacity enough for all the planned activities, as well as flexibility to adapt to all the contingencies - of space and resources- that might come up during the Colloquium.
- ➔ Rooms for the disabled should meet the standardized distances to allow a wheelchair in, and in order to ensure this, a visit to the same hotel with a wheelchair is advisable to check accessibility.
- ➔ Since most of the requests imply low and mid-range hotels, more rooms in hotels of these types should be booked.
- ➔ It is important that the registration and hotel booking forms include clear explanations as to return policies concerning incursions, hotel bookings, excursions and social events.

5– Web Page

- Designing the Web page.

The Web page www.colloquium.info, maintained by the Norwegian Branch of the Nordic Cochrane Centre, was established as the official page of the Cochrane Colloquia.

At first there was some delay in the implementation of the Colloquium Web site, due partly to changes in the people in charge of the Nordic Center. This involved a certain delay in the implementation of some of the functionalities of the Web page. However, after sorting out these initial problems, the operation of the Web page was overall quite stable.

Communication with the Norway team was overall fluent. We should congratulate the Norwegian development team, who sometimes had to operate against the clock to meet our deadlines.

Key aspects to underscore about the Web page:

- It is a product tailored to organize colloquia.
 - It requires a predefined working pattern. Although these aspects make working design easier, it also imposes restrictions and limitations to the potentialities implied in the activities.
 - The Web page administration, however simple, is sometimes little intuitive, and requires a minimum previous learning.
 - The type of operation of the Web site facilitates documenting the changes and ensuring that the site is visualized correctly. However, this sometimes results in slower work that may be an inconvenience near in time to the Colloquium. Problems, on the other hand, may be favorable.
 - Use of the colloquium.info domain: this functionality saves costs and avoids doubts in the Web nomenclature from the very beginning. It is also an easy-to-remember address that makes for a user-friendly interaction.
 - E-mail addresses: together with the domain it is possible to register several "sham" e-mail addresses, that is, addresses that redirect mail to other addresses. This has two main advantages: first, if there is a change in the distribution of functions, a change in the redirected e-mail address sorts out the difficulty; and second, the redirecting allows sending the same message to more than one person to ensure that the message will always be displayed.
- Pro and cons of using a specific Web page versus the Norwegian Web
- Working with a predefined structure conditions certain Web applications, and somehow imposes limits on the administrator. However, the use of a tool tailored to the organization of colloquia also helps to avoid overwork and fosters safe activities.
- This tool is flexible enough to include Web pages other than the colloquia's while still working on it.
- The saving of costs and of processes, both in the domain name reserve as well as in the payment of the server and Web design is significant.
 - The possibility of recycling colloquia's previous material and designs is really advantageous. It also makes it possible to learn from errors, to continue using what proved useful and to improve what has posed problems in previous editions.
 - The fact of working with an alien system hinders the externalization of the Web function, that is, hiring an external company to control its design and updating, since they are used to working with their own systems. Since the information featured on the site will call for a person in charge of its organization, in the event a center with few human resources but with a great deal of financing organized a Colloquium using the Web might not be in his interests.

- Functioning problems of the organization users

Once the functioning of the program has been learned, one of the problems to face might be the fact of several users working simultaneously. Incidental errors might occur unless tasks are clearly divided.

The Web publication step might also be skipped with the subsequent lack of visualization of the last changes made to the site.

- Functioning problems of the Colloquium users

Even though the instructions seemed clear and adequate, the Web users still had doubts regarding the web functioning. A reduction in the number of queries regarding the site functions is likely to occur if the web is maintained in the future.

- Site contents

It is really important to think about the structure of the contents to include in the Web beforehand. Although it is possible to add documents along the way, changing the folder structure used to group contents in the site is really difficult. Many people have problems to find specific information despite the clear and intuitive way in which it is displayed. However, having the answer to as many possible questions as possible available on the site speeds up the proper reply (sending a mail through a direct link to the page with the required information avoids future questions).

It is important to underscore the information that will be of use during the Colloquium and to make printing easier.

If bilingual selections are planned, the fact that certain sections (such as the program) are often updated should be considered. It is necessary to have the proper mechanisms used to synchronize both languages but given the speed at which changes might occur, it is recommended that both program and meetings pages appear in both languages.

The structure that was finally used in the Barcelona Colloquium site may be consulted at www.colloquium.info/2003.

- Useful services to include in the site

Currently, the web site includes functionalities concerning room management, organization of meetings and workshops and registration to them.

For developmental purposes, certain functionalities should be considered:

1- Registration to the Colloquium

Although this is a service that will be always necessary, including this function in the Web page does not seem, at present, to be advisable. Since the colloquia are organized by professionals, they are used to working with previously prepared forms and this functionality could cause problems. In the event that future colloquia became organized centrally by an international company this recommendation should be reviewed.

2- Login to the site

It would be advisable to maintain this service only to be synchronized with the existing data in the Cochrane Contact Database. This would allow data maintenance that is stored in the database as well as its updating.

3- Workshop management

The registration to workshops is quick and useful for most users but its on-site management poses problems. A tool might come in handy to get reports on the overall status of the seminars (open/closed seminars, available seats, etc.) facilitating last-minute registration.

4- Visual management of the program and the schedule

It would be interesting that the program included a user-friendly tool that helps plan the schedule, and that it permits both a good visualization and that it is easy to print. Ideally, it should permit a certain personalization of the user so that it could list the workshops and meetings to those which have been registered.

Recommendations

- ➔ It is highly recommended to have a least one other person to help in the addition of contents apart from the one in charge of the Web site. It is convenient to bear in mind this need beforehand, because the Web site management, though simple, requires some previous learning.
- ➔ Although it is not mandatory, it is useful that people who work on the site have some knowledge of HTML language.
- ➔ Plan ahead the information that should appear on the site with all the committees and the OPC. Try to satisfy the most frequent questions with updates to the Web site.
- ➔ It should be made clear who will reply to which type of query. It is important to acknowledge receipt of all queries.
- ➔ It is recommended to use XXX@colloquium.info addresses to resend the messages to more than one person. However, it is necessary to define clearly the recipients' responsibilities in order to ensure that all the messages are answered adequately.
- ➔ It is advisable that the information on the program and schedules is in a format that is easy to print.

6– Funding Sources

Funding sources considered for the Colloquium were: surplus from the previous Colloquium, income from registrations, national and international fellowships, sponsorships of various sources, exhibition area and specific funds from the center.

Registrations

The price of the registrations was defined in relation to the prices of the colloquia from previous years and of the expenses to cover this year. It was attempted not to surpass the previous year's budget while covering all the expenses for the six days of the Colloquium including those of the social events. Registrations were fractioned with discounts in terms of the proximity to the date of the event with the aim to encourage early enrolments and to have an overall estimate of the number of enrolled people. Appendix 1 provides a list of registration fees.

	Total	Early	Normal	Late	On-site
Full registration	676	327	158	187	4
Second-part registration	139	20	24	94	1
One day	54				
Accompanying person	33				
<i>People registered</i>	<i>902</i>				
Invited people / Speakers / Special registration fees	72				
Organizers	38				
<i>Total attendants</i>	<i>1012</i>				

The participants are categorized by country of provenance below.

United Kingdom	264	26%	Sweden	9	<1%	Nigeria	2	<1%
Spain	207	21%	Argentina	8	“	Philippines	2	“
Canada	76	7%	South Africa	8	“	Poland	2	“
Usa	73	7%	Finland	7	“	Zimbabwe	2	“
Australia	52	5%	Russia	7	“	Thailand	2	“
Italy	43	<5%	Brazil	6	“	Egypt	1	“
Germany	40	“	Ireland	6	“	Iceland	1	“
Netherlands	37	“	Japan	6	“	India	1	“
Denmark	35	“	China	5	“	Jamaica	1	“
Switzerland	19	“	Colombia	5	“	Peru	1	“
Norway	18	“	Mexico	5	“	Portugal	1	“
Belgium	12	“	Costa Rica	4	“	Taiwan	1	“
France	11	“	Israel	3	“	Uruguay	1	“
Chile	10	<1%	Austria	2	“	Venezuela	1	“
New Zealand	10	“	Cuba	2	“	Unknown	1	“
			Kenya	2	“	Total	1012	

Recommendations

- ➔ The registration fees should include special prices for students and for people in developing countries.
- ➔ It is highly advisable that the Colloquium organizers can report to the organizers of the following Colloquium on the economic surplus as soon as possible, since half of this is destined to award a grant to participants of the future Colloquium. The sooner the amount is made available, the earlier the grant management will be initiated given the time it takes in some cases and because it will allow for the relocation of the grant money from the recipients that eventually cannot attend the event.
- ➔ No matter the degree of credit facilities for the registration, most of the participants enroll nearer to the event date.

Various Grants

In order to help in the organization of the 11th Colloquium, the local Organizing Committee prepared and sent several aid requests to open calls by public institutions, both local as well as national or European. The concepts these aids were requested for have to do mainly with renting of accommodation, technical equipment (audiovisual, interpreting, etc.), expenses for guest speakers, grants to afford registration costs for speakers. The success achieved in these requests varied considerably, but it was definitely insufficient as to the invested effort and above all the degree of the real needs of the event organization. Appendix 2 includes a list of awarded/denied grants.

The effort required to prepare and send a grant application is considerable, although this effort may be effective since it is the same concept (Colloquium organization) and most of the prepared documents may be recycled. Nevertheless, the terms (usually short) established in the calls require a more or less intensive dedication that can bring about problems in relation to the rest of existing arrangements and availabilities of the Center. It would be convenient to be able to anticipate future calls (at least a year in advance) and, in that way, to prepare the requests to be submitted in time. Nevertheless, the specific dynamics and availability of the Center make it very difficult to predict any

calls. Added to this, there is the difficulty in trying to get that information from a reliable source. It would also be desirable to identify a person from the Center that could assume, at least part time but with specific dedication, the coordination of the grants a year before the event, as well as its follow-up until all the transactions required by the call are fulfilled (closing of the economic and scientific memory of the activity).

For the European calls, very complex but at the same time large, it would be suitable if these were coordinated centrally at the Cochrane Collaboration, exerting from there some kind of influence or lobby over the decision-making centers in Brussels. The Cochrane Collaboration would deserve a higher success rate not yet fulfilled to this date, possibly because of the limited capacity of penetration or influence on the funding institutions in the European Union. Given the vast number of specific programs created within the 6th EU Framework Program (whose possibilities should be explored carefully, especially the “Marie Curie Actions – Human resources & mobility”), it should be feasible to be able to guarantee, year after year, important funding that, directly (e.g. renting of the equipment, spaces, etc.) or indirectly (e.g. payment of registrations, travel bags, etc.), could significantly facilitate the organization of future Colloquia.

Except for the requests at the local level (regional or national), the Cochrane Collaboration should also explore centrally other alternative funding sources at the international level (foundations, institutions, etc.).

For all requests, including the local ones, a standard (medium length) dossier could be developed centrally at the Cochrane Collaboration dealing with the relevance of the Colloquium, with reference signatures by its top representatives and ideally by other international well-known people involved, to be annexed to the rest of the required documentation for each call as an Appendix. This Appendix or dossier should be edited thoroughly at the level of format and contents since its main objective would be to create an image of serious and competitive organization.

Recommendations

➔ A member of the organizing committee should work part time a year in advance to plan calls and prepare document requirements which have a short preparation time. This same person should carry out the post-Colloquium follow-up to complete the necessary proceedings, and specially to guarantee that all the legal requirements established in the respective calls are met on time (especially the documented justification of the received funds).

➔ It is advisable to provide the future organizers with a copy of the presented documentation to optimize the necessary tasks. This documentation could be expanded and improved in the different editions of the Colloquium, until an optimal status is attained.

➔ It would be advisable to send a person to exert influence on Brussels to activate the necessary links in the European Union.

Sponsors and Stands

Given the little chance of getting significant funding, smaller sponsorships were sought for certain sessions. To this end, autonomic governments, scientific foundations, publishing houses, and Cochrane Groups were contacted among others. Support by the pharmaceutical industry was restricted to activities outside the scientific program. Sponsorship from these sources was assessed negatively by some participants.

Additional funding for the grants was obtained from the Rockefeller Foundation, as well as discounts from Iberia in the regular price of the tickets for the Colloquium participants.

Several people were interested in putting a stand at the Colloquium but the type of activity that is presented should be filtered. The most effective ones are those which represent medical publishing houses, in our case BMJ, Wiley, Biostat, and Duodecim.

Recommendations

- ➔ People are likely to misinterpret the public character of some local sponsors.
- ➔ It is recommended that exhibition area provides more economical solutions than that of the stand to care for the needs of those low budget companies interested in participating. A table shared by different representatives might be a solution.
- ➔ Seeking small sponsors is very effective since each of them may orient their support to a topic they are specifically interested in promoting.
- ➔ There is a certain demand for objects with the Cochrane logotype (T-shirts, ball-point pens, watches, caps, etc.).

Other Funds

The organizing center dedicated funds of its own to cover expenses (accommodation and meals) of the Organizing Committee members from Latin American countries.

7- Communications and Announcements

It is vital in this area to define who the target public of the Colloquium is and the way to reach it. A basic distinction was established for our Colloquium: international dissemination (people already closely involved some way or other to the Cochrane Collaboration) and local dissemination (people interested in our area of reference, especially newcomers).

- Dissemination at the international level

It basically focused on using the Cochrane media, mainly CCInfo and Cochrane News, assuming that they are already linked to the Cochrane Collaboration for the most part.

We voluntarily restrict the information sent through the Cochrane distribution lists in order to avoid mail duplication. We believe this strategy has been useful and gave us access to and let us deal with crucial and urgent information through the distribution lists. However, it is very important to have some control over the information included in these lists since there are requests for information that are channeled through the lists and may be confounding if answered by people outside the Colloquium Organizing Committee.

It is very advisable to come to an agreement with the CCInfo editors about periodicity to plan which data on the Colloquium will be submitted and to measure the amount that is sent while being able to do it in a stable manner. From our experience, we believe that a greater impact is achieved by sending information continuously and in small doses through CCInfo. It is a useful source of constant information concerning the Colloquium.

Cochrane News is the ideal format to send information illustrated with pictures and photographs. It also helps to provide more detailed information on the organization of the Colloquium and its structure, which may be used as a reference to answer the most

common questions. It can be useful to encourage undecided potential attendees or to attract new ones.

As channels of dissemination to consider in this sense, it is also necessary to consider the submissions of the Library CD-ROMs by Wiley. In view of the fact that some of the users of the CD version will surely have difficulty connecting to the Internet, this is a way to provide them with information and saving at the same time individual mailing costs. It is advisable to agree on the dates to send materials to Wiley since it is likely that these materials will require some manipulation. Despite the fact that this option was eventually not used, Wiley showed itself receptive when asked for it.

It is essential to use the website as a support aid to provide more comprehensive data. See recommendations in the Web site section.

- Local dissemination

In view of the fact that it is presumed that most people most directly related to Cochrane will finally be linked in one way or another to the Colloquium (as speakers, etc), it is preferable to focus the dissemination at local level (i.e., country or geographical area) on those people with interest in the Cochrane Collaboration, but not involved (yet) with it.

These are the media we took into account:

- Websites of conferences and/or scientific societies

In some cases, the Cochrane Colloquium may be cited by personal contacts. It also makes it possible sometimes to have an entry to certain sanitary groups that do not know the Cochrane Collaboration but could be interested in its activities. Providing the code to insert a Colloquium "banner" or logotype makes the implementation of this option easier, though with limited results.

- In medical journals

It is a good strategy to seek the complicity of scientific societies publishing bulletins so that they include an article on the Cochrane Collaboration and promote or recommend taking part in the Colloquium. To maximize effectiveness, it is advisable to try and work a year in advance, given the complexity of deadlines and planning of subjects for these journals.

- Mailing lists

Sending messages to already existing distribution lists is an inexpensive and quite useful way provided the lists are selected adequately. Lists dealing with similar topics (research, evidence-based health care, etc.) should be prioritized.

- Announcements in specialized press

In some cases, it is possible to post announcements of the Colloquium in the specialized press. This implies a cost but the impact is greater. It is possible to suggest this possibility when other forms have failed and if a certain impact is sought or a particular institution volunteers as sponsor for such strategy.

- Press releases

This media provides room for trying to enhance the relevance of the Colloquium and introduce it in the media agenda. It is more useful to take advantage later of the support for the Colloquium than to attract new suitors.

- Other possible dissemination strategies.

A little exploited but potentially useful tool would be the use of the participants' database from previous Colloquia to promote future events. However, this measure can be incompatible with the regulation concerning the protection of personal data. Surely it would be useful to add a disclaimer warning people who provide their data that they can be used for purposes of dissemination of future colloquia while providing at the same time the option to invalidate this option in case the person who registers wishes that.

Recommendations

- ➔ Plan communications carefully. Try as far as possible to anticipate when relevant information will be available to disseminate it in the most appropriate media.
- ➔ Try to ally scientific societies to have them use their communication channels to promote the Colloquium. It is a very useful strategy for scientific societies that want to collaborate but cannot do it economically.
- ➔ Obtain the maximum benefit from the Cochrane dissemination channels by careful planning of the information to disseminate in each.
- ➔ Explore Wiley's collaboration in the promotion.

8- Organization of Committees

Several types of committees, organized following the sketch in Appendix 3, were set up in the organization of the Barcelona Colloquium. Briefly, the committees were:

- Honorary Committee: constituted by well-known public people and representatives of sponsors.
- Advisory Committee: constituted by people in charge of contacting people and taking concrete actions for the organization and the sponsorship of the Colloquium.
- Scientific Committee: constituted by the Cochrane Center directors, representatives of the Methods Groups, and by people with experience in the CC. Its task is to help the Organizing Committee in the definition of the content and structure of the scientific program, and in the identification of speakers.
- Organizing Committee: constituted by the local committee and representatives of the Iberoamerican Network.
- Executive Committee: simplified local version of the organizing and scientific committees. Its task is to take on all the executive aspects expeditiously and efficiently.
- Abstracts Subcommittee: made up by a convenor, a secretary, and several people in charge of abstract selection, it is dependent on the Scientific Committee. The committee is in charge of designing the "call for abstracts" and carrying out the selection of abstracts and their categorization into oral presentations or posters.
- Subcommittee for consumer stipends: convenor, secretary, two members of the Steering Group, and two additional members. Dependent on the Scientific Committee.

- Subcommittee for stipends in developing countries: convenor, secretary, two members of the Steering Group, and two additional members. Dependent on the Scientific Committee.
- Thomas Chalmers Award Subcommittee: group independent of the organization.
- Kenneth Warren Award Subcommittee: group independent of the organization.
- Chris Silagy Award Subcommittee: group independent of the organization.

Experiences:

The Organizing Committee was constituted by 5 people, three of which devoted a substantial part of their time throughout the entire pre-Colloquium year. However, one of these five organizers was on leave a few months prior to the Colloquium. It is advisable to have a large number of organizers, or a more significant dedication on their part, during the year prior to the Colloquium.

There was an uneven participation by the members of the committees. On the one hand, some of the representatives of the CCSG assigned to the Committees of Stipends were not available enough for an effective collaboration. On the other, some of the members chosen by the Organizing Committee totally neglected the previously accepted responsibilities.

Recommendations

- ➔ The preparation of the Colloquium is divided into two periods: the first one has an intensive work component for the chair and secretaries of the Scientific Committee and the second implies an intensive workload for the chair and secretaries of the Organizing Committee.
- ➔ The Organizing committee should have 7 people, 3 of them working full-time for a optimum distribution of the work.
- ➔ The Honorary and Advisory Committees are dispensable, their existence perhaps related to the Latin working structure.
- ➔ It is important to identify experienced chairs and/or secretaries in the Subcommittees of Abstracts and Stipends and then free the Organizing Committee of an important part of work.
- ➔ It would be convenient to clarify the role of the members of the CCSG assigned to the different committees, and their availability and level of involvement.
- ➔ It could be necessary to set up an additional team for the selection of workshops.
- ➔ The number of committee member should be related to the size and length of the Colloquium, whether funds should be sought or not, etc.

9– Definition of the Program Outline

Scientific Contents

The scientific activities in the Colloquium included plenaries, cultural conferences, methodological and clinical parallel sessions, workshops and work meetings. The plenaries, workshops, and work meetings are usual activities in all the Cochrane Colloquia, accepted without objections by all the participants.

The cultural conferences, in which the focus was the sociocultural aspects related to health care established in the Colloquium slogan, implied the main innovation of the scientific program. The level of acceptance of this innovation is unknown (only one positive and one negative comment from all the received surveys).

Focusing on pathology areas, the parallel sessions dealt with the health care and evidence aspect of the Colloquium slogan and reflect a significant part of the

Cochranites' activities and interests. The interests of methodology experts were not reflected in these activities and as consequence decided to organize alternative sessions (i.e. Cochrane-Campbell meeting).

The parallel sessions with submitted abstracts were suitable for treating methodological aspects (Mondays and Tuesdays) and more varied clinical aspects (Thursdays and Fridays). The wide range of options was aimed at satisfying the interests of a very heterogeneous audience. The level of acceptance of these proposals among the Colloquium participants is not known in great detail.

- Speakers' expertise and depth of topics.

The speakers invited to the Colloquium came on a voluntary basis, and are busy professionals who often finished their speeches a few hours before giving them. The quality and depth of the presentations is hardly any predictable so the scientific quality of planned sessions is difficult to anticipate beforehand.

- Selection and sending of letters of invitation to the speakers:

The Scientific Committee especially emphasized guaranteeing the participation of women and of developing country representatives in each of the sessions. It is difficult to identify speakers that meet these characteristics and who can afford attending the Colloquium, so it would be advisable to give future organizers the identified names.

It is important to specify whether guests' expenses are covered by the organization or if they have to afford them.

It is necessary to highlight that an effort was made to make speakers' distribution as fair as possible. In this sense, 80 of the 221 speakers (36%) were women. In addition, the geographical distribution of the speakers was as follows:

Europe: 130 (58,8%)
North America: 38 (17,2%)
Australia / New Zealand: 17 (7,7%)
Latin America: 15 (6,8%)
Africa: 12 (5,4%)
Asia: 9 (4,1%)

- Simultaneous translation:

Pros of simultaneous translation: it favors the dissemination of the conference among local people with little knowledge of English, respects linguistic diversity in the organizing country, and makes it possible to have speakers with little confidence in their knowledge of English.

Cons of simultaneous translation: it is poorly accepted by certain groups (i.e. the Dutch); it is hardly any usual and involves organizational problems at the level of information to the assistants; it is expensive and makes the most charismatic speakers less attractive; it becomes a negative factor when combined with poorly structured speakers.

- Dissemination of the scientific content of the Colloquium.

The organizers had almost all the presentations at hand because the budget included paying technicians to copy them on to a disk.

All guest speakers (plenaries, parallel sessions by pathology) were asked permission to display their web presentation in pdf format. There have been only two objections, which were eventually resolved, and some unanswered cases.

Plenaries were recorded on video, and the possibility of editing this video for a wide or restricted dissemination is being studied (i.e. sending a copy in digital format to the Cochrane entities).

Recommendations

- ➔ The content of the Colloquium should reflect the clinical and methodological scope of the Cochrane activities.
- ➔ Topics that are crucial for the CC (i.e. conflicts of interest) cannot be dealt with in a plenary session with enough depth. Perhaps a broader and diverse approach may be more effective to obtain a tangible and accepted “output” (i.e. to combine plenary sessions with workshops, discussing a series of previously established proposals)
- ➔ It is difficult to strike a balance of sex and geographical distribution in the speakers' panel and therefore it would be interesting to create a database of possible speakers for future colloquia.
- ➔ Having representatives of the Cochrane entities (e.g. Coordinating Editors) in the sessions (e.g. as chair, co-chair or speaker) represents an acknowledgement to their activity and collaboration, and gives them the chance to comment on their work within the Collaboration.
- ➔ The need and convenience of simultaneous translation should be seriously considered by the organizers.

Social Contents

The social content of the Colloquium involves all those activities outside the scientific program (cultural events or sports) which gave the event its lively character. Excursions were considered outside the program and were offered as an alternative to show visitors around the city and its surroundings. The area to locate the Colloquium venue was selected among other reasons by the proximity to cultural and sports spaces, which allowed the participants, to enjoy them independently if they wanted. In this sense, the Montjuïc Mountain became the best option, since it includes several museums and circuits as well as sports facilities. It was sought to guarantee the success of attendance to the social events and to this aim, it was decided that all social events would be free and that the companions could also attend with a registration fee that covered the expenses. The most interesting aspects to comment are:

Meals

Food is a very decisive factor in our culture, both for its content and for the way in which is developed. It was decided that meals should have a specific weight within the Colloquium, which meant that full meals would be served at tables. Apart from letting participants learn about the diversity and richness of the Mediterranean food, this option facilitates and promotes contacts and cultural exchanges among the people sitting at the same table. The drawback lies in the cost, which is higher than in the buffet or other similar modalities, and with time, it is also higher than other catering modalities.

Social Activities

Cultural activities took place in the city's historical buildings, visiting their rooms as well as participating in sports events and celebrations. Both the Olympic Tournament and the Farewell Party are activities in which the participants enjoy, share, and get to know one another in an environment other than that of work. It was the second year for the song contest and the first for the painting contest. The number of participants grows as the members know of these activities, which are a good excuse to learn about those

cochranites with artistic interests and at the same time encourage participation in non-scientific topics.

Recommendations

→ In case the social events are free, there should be an effective attendance control to adjust space reservations and meal provisions as much as possible. It is not enough to enroll in the event since some people enroll and do not attend and others attend without a registration. Judging by our experience, it is impossible to know a priori which dynamics people will follow in these cases. There are cases in which more people attend than the ones that were enrolled and vice versa.

→ There should be a strict control with special menus: only 3 people requested vegetarian menu on enrolling but more than 70 were served.

→ It is advisable to continue with the song and painting contests and especially with the Olympic Tournament, adding more themes and specialties in each of them. One option for the song contest could be the group contest, which was often requested

→ All the venues for social events should be tested in terms of facilities for the disabled, both at the entrance and services.

→ Children's care services (babysitters) were also requested. In our case, it was economically more convenient to hire a person each time it was requested rather than set up a specific nursery to take care of children at the same time.

10– Workshops

The list of workshops was created out of a new database, which included workshops from previous colloquia. Comparing workshops from different editions helped identify a series of regular workshops dealing with key issues for the Cochrane Collaboration, which should be included in every edition of the Colloquium (i.e. introduction to the Cochrane Library).

The second step in the preparation of the list of workshops was the sending of mails to the convenors of all the Cochrane Methods Groups and all the CRG, requesting proposals for workshops. Shortly afterwards, a “Call for workshops” was published in the Web page and in the CCInfo. Finally, workshops specific to subjects of interest were requested (i.e. clinical practice guidelines to Andy Oxman).

No workshop proposal was rejected at first since all seemed good quality proposals based on the preliminary information provided by the convenors. The information provided in the call for workshops is limited considering the contents of the workshop and inexistent considering the convenor's interest or preparation. This aspect was commented in the assessment surveys, which suggested that a committee should be designed to screen and coordinate the workshops planned during the colloquia.

To estimate the necessary number of workshops, the expected number of participants was divided by the number of participants requested by the organizers of the workshops and from here more workshops were organized to include all the participants. Since the workshops are frequently destined to a limited number of participants, it was necessary to organize many concurrent workshops. This causes organizational difficulties because of the high number of necessary rooms and the cost of the audiovisual equipment in all of them, and paradoxically causes deception in the Colloquium participants, who

perceive that they can only attend a very limited number of workshops from a wide and interesting range of offers.

Workshops were planned with such criteria as the existence of introductory workshops in all three sessions, Spanish workshops in all three sessions, convenors of two workshops having access to a workshop of their interest in their free session, etc.

As far as possible, workshops were planned in such a way as to avoid overlap among them though this was inevitable on occasion. A few workshops overlapped with common convenors, because the information provided beforehand by the convenors was not complete. In addition, workshops overlapped with at least one meeting (Co-eds meeting), which was organized subsequently outside the schedule established for the meetings. This aspect, for which the organization cannot be held responsible, was negatively assessed by several respondents and by the convener of an affected workshop.

Given the uncertainty surrounding the available budget, certain measures to reduce the use of audiovisual media were taken. Messages asking whether the presentation could be carried out using alternative media were sent and a transparency printing service was offered. This option was partially accepted, and 10% of the presenters who requested audiovisuals agreed to use alternative media. However, it was possible in the end to obtain audiovisual media for all the sessions, and the final effectiveness of this measure could not be assessed.

In the Colloquium assessment, the respondents point out their interest in doing the greatest possible number of workshops, since this makes it possible for them to adapt the Colloquium to their particular needs.

Recommendations:

- ➔ Workshops with a limited number of participants + large number of participants = large number of workshops required --> uneven quality of the workshops, logistical problems. Consider the possibility of repeating workshops that seem very popular a priori.
- ➔ Maintaining a database of workshops organized in the colloquia, as a useful source of information for future organizers.
- ➔ Plan the basic workshops that are organized every year (introduction to the CL, ProCite, MerKaat, handsearch, introduction to meta-analysis).
- ➔ Methodological and statistical workshops are highly requested, which calls for the collaboration of representatives from Methods Groups in their organization.
- ➔ Ask the most detailed information on the call for workshops in terms of content, convenors and logistical needs. Predict that the information provided is NEVER 100% complete or reliable.
- ➔ Attempt to “reward” the convenors of multiple workshops by programming workshops of their interest and that do not coincide with those they organize.
- ➔ Set up a Workshops Committee that selects and prioritizes the workshops to be offered during the colloquium.
- ➔ Avoid planning events during the workshops. It is a moment of great logistical pressure and of space which makes it incompatible with other events.

11 – Meetings

The organization of meetings requires a great logistical effort and meeting a large number of pre-requisites. The most important are:

- Meetings of the Steering Group, and those of its representatives with their constituencies.

The Steering Group requires a day and a half's meeting, on separated days. Between meeting days of the Steering Group, the representatives of the different entities should have time to meet with the people they represent.

- The RCG/TSC request an entire day, which should not coincide with CRG meetings and after the Steering Group. They require some time for individual work and some for team work.

- The Co-eds also ask for a whole day, which should not coincide with CRG meetings and after the Steering Group. They require some time for individual work and some for team work.

Co-eds and RGC/TSC should have a joint meeting session.

- The Center directors require a day's meeting, prior to the meeting of the Cochrane Centers staff.

- The representatives of the Cochrane Centers require a 2 to 3 hours' meeting with the Cochrane Centers' staff, plus a dinner in a more relaxed environment.

In the case of Barcelona, the RGC/TSC meeting was held after the opening ceremony. Since meetings were held at a venue other than that of the opening, transfer of the participants had to be taken care of. Unfortunately, the circulation of incorrect information about transport, which was unknown to the organizers, caused unpleasant feelings among the participants. There was also confusion in the schedules, which caused delays to get to the meeting. In future editions it would be advisable to agree beforehand on how to face unexpected contingencies.

The meeting of Co-Editors was held on Tuesday, apart from the activities that should be carried out on that day. This caused many complaints, both by Co-eds and conveners of workshops who expected Co-eds as the potential audience.

It is necessary to consider in advance that all the Cochrane entities (around 100) want to meet. Accordingly, it is necessary to have enough rooms available for the whole meetings sessions. It should also be considered that some institutions not strictly Cochrane (AGREE, Campbell) want to organize extended meetings. Due to its duration, these meetings had to be programmed in at the same time as the scientific sessions, which is not desirable from the point of view of the organizers, but it may be so from the standpoint of methodology experts that are not interested in clinical meetings. This coincidence brought about complaints in some of the people affected. A meeting could not be held because there was not enough room at the hotel, and it was eventually organized at a nearby hotel.

Avoiding overlaps among meetings should be the conveners of meetings' responsibility. Given that some cochraneites have very dissimilar interests, it is impossible to fully guarantee that there will not be any overlaps (i.e. that a person may not wish to attend two simultaneous meetings). In order to avoid this, some entities request a meeting outside the schedule established for the meetings in order to guarantee that their meeting does not overlap with another.

In general, the meetings do not require audiovisual media but can be requested. In our case, a small number of entities had special requirements for their meetings, such as an unusual arrangement of the workroom, or the availability of extra elements in order to entertain the participants (i.e., aperitifs or non-standard luncheons, with a variety of wines, drinks, etc.)

It is necessary to be ready for such requests, and to predict which items should be charged as extras.

It was made available that the meetings could be held at lunch. In general this measure was well received, but it is necessary to have at least 15 minutes to ensure that the room is ready for the following activity. In our case, serving the food in the meeting room had a similar cost to that of the conventional luncheon and could be offered in advance to the entities that requested it at no additional cost.

Recommendation:

→ Agree with the CC Steering Group on the requirements for the CCSG meetings and for the entities with their representatives in order to establish some kind of standard. Meeting all the requirements is practically impossible without the participants arriving in the city with enough anticipation and without any overlaps with Colloquium activities. Setting the larger meetings is rather complex and it could be very useful for organizers to set a standard for future colloquia.

→ Deciding a priori on the larger meetings because it is a requirement to call the meetings for all other entities.

→ The meeting registry as well as the avoidance of undesired overlaps should be their own convenors' responsibility.

→ Differentiate between Cochrane meetings from Cochrane related meetings.

→ Bear in mind that there will be requests for meetings with schedules that overlap with Colloquium activities. Predict in which cases this option will be acceptable.

→ Set up a deadline to establish requirement for the meetings. Establish clearly which means are available for the meeting and their cost (if applicable). Clarify form of payment a priori.

12– Abstracts and Poster Sessions

The abstract committee was chaired by Phil Alderson (UK Cochrane Centre) with Elinor Thompson and Pablo Alonso (Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre) as co-secretaries.

The topics for the oral presentation sessions were decided by the Executive Committee. Sixteen oral sessions were initially defined as follows:

- Hot issues related to meta-analysis in systematic reviews
- How and when to include qualitative data in systematic reviews
- Ensuring the methodological quality of reviews
- Hunting trials: published, unpublished and ongoing trials
- Clinical practice guidelines
- Health care quality assessment
- Diagnostic tests and screening
- Consumers and sources of information for patients
- Evidence and primary care

- Methods session with The Campbell Collaboration
- Evidence based education
- Evidence based clinical practice
- Evidence and pharmacological interventions
- Evidence and international co-operation in developing countries
- Evidence based child-care
- Methods session

Posters were invited on any topic that was relevant to the Colloquium.

The call for abstracts was posted on the Colloquium web-site on January 15th with a closing date of 15th April. In the event this closing date was extended to May 9th to allow more people to send in abstracts but we decided not to let people know about this until the closing date –to encourage as many last minute submissions as possible. This strategy proved to be quite effective. A copy of the ‘Call for Abstracts’ can be obtained at the web site (www.colloquium.info/2003).

People posted their abstracts on the web-site and these were collated by Viajes Iberia who sent us regular updates on progress. Once the closing date had passed, the abstract committee reviewed all the abstracts to ensure that they met the criteria specified in the call. Where these criteria were not met the abstract was rejected prior to peer review. The most common reason for rejection was where people had submitted an abstract which just described the process of doing and the content of a systematic review with no extra methodological interest.

Each abstract was then sent out to two independent peer reviewers (Annex 4) with a letter (Annex 5) explaining how the reviewer should score it. A total of 326 abstracts were submitted to the web-site of which 272 were sent for peer review.

Once all the scorings were received the abstract committee reviewed the assessments and allocated the abstracts according to the scores to the relevant sessions. Abstracts accepted for oral presentation were not always put in the same session that the author had suggested since some sessions were overfull whereas others did not have enough good submissions.

In the end given the content of the abstracts submitted, the final session titles were modified slightly (see Scientific Program).

A total of 200 posters and 57 oral presentations were accepted. A letter was sent from the Chair of the Abstract Committee to everyone who had submitted an abstract informing them of the outcome (appendix 8).

Publication of abstracts:

We considered undertaking the electronic publishing of the abstracts in BioMed Central. Initially they suggested that the Collaboration could take out an institutional membership with them which would allow members to submit and publish articles free of charge and would cover the costs of publishing the Colloquium abstracts.

We were interested in the possibility of them undertaking at least the on-line publication of the abstracts and explored the potential for their waiving the costs in return for an

exhibition space/sponsorship. Alternatively if the Collaboration were interested in taking out an institutional membership this would be another way of the costs being met.

Biomed estimated the following costs for the online publication of the abstracts: “Assuming that approximately 200-225 abstracts are submitted and that these are prepared according to our prescribed format (see the guidelines for preparation at <http://www.biomedcentral.com/info/authors/abstractsguide>) the cost for online only publication will be GB pounds sterling: 2,105. Alternatively, if you would like us to reformat the abstracts from the electronic files supplied by the authors, we can arrange this for you and the total cost for online publication in this case will be GBP 2,995.”

In the end we did not reach an agreement because of the high costs involved and Biomed did not attend the Colloquium.

The abstracts were published in the Colloquium abstract book and the layout and formatting was done in house. Since the abstracts had already been prepared in Word by the authors and had been collated into a single file by Viajes Iberia this process was quite straight forward, although there had been some glitches in the transfer of information and in a few cases authors had to be contacted for clarification. It was more time consuming than expected because of all the editing required to bring it into a common format-at least 7-10 days.

- Posters

During the Colloquium some 200 posters were displayed among all the participants.

The service provided by the volunteers in this session, including the two parts in which the Colloquium was divided, consisted in the following items:

- Provide the necessary material to hang the posters
- Help in hanging the posters, if necessary.
- Placing of participants in the right spot
- Solve any doubt or problem connected with the posters.

Apart from the volunteers (about 4), participants also had access to a table with material and to a hotel representative with location data of the posters, which were numbered with the place they would be displayed.

In general the session developed normally. Some of the problems and/or difficulties we had to face were as follows:

- Little homogeneity in the size of some posters; its size was higher than the panel, and stood out or 2 panels had to be used; some weighed too much for the material we had available, and had to be often repositioned.
- Different formats: some were simply the whole PowerPoint presentation, they were an authentic “puzzle” of 10 or more pages in dina-4.

Ideally, every participant had to receive support from volunteers given the hard work we had to do at particular times; however, all people we helped were satisfied and grateful to us.

13– Consumer Stipends

Principles of Consumer Stipend Organization

As it was the case for the first time in the previous Stavanger Colloquium, the Organizing Committee of the Barcelona XI Cochrane Colloquium was in charge of the organization of the Consumer Stipends Committee. Upon developing its work, this committee took into account the guidelines and suggestions provided in the Final Report of the 10th Cochrane Colloquium (section 15.1), although there were some limitations for its application, as it is commented below.

At the time of establishing the procedures, it was considered that most of the consumer representatives to whom finally would be granted an aid (many of the applicants come from developing countries) will need enough time in advance to organize their trips and, in addition, may face problems to pay in advance certain reimbursable expenses. Thus, the Committee tried to guarantee that decisions were communicated enough in advance. Furthermore, it was attempted that the benefited candidates will enjoy the same possibilities and conveniences as the rest of registered participants.

Consumer Stipends: The Application and Selection Process

Establishing a Consumer Stipend Committee

Based on the Final Report of the 10th Cochrane Colloquium, for the purposes of the constitution of this committee any candidate who wished to apply for a grant from this same committee was excluded. This circumstance implies a potential limitation at the time of incorporating adequate candidates (particularly consumers with experience in the organization) to be part of this committee. Nevertheless, funds offered by the Cochrane Consumer Network for some of the members of their governing council made it possible to overcome this potential limitation and to eventually incorporate some of them.

The two consumer representatives at the CCSG (Silvana Simi, Italy, and Samuel Ochieng, Kenya) as well as a member of the Cochrane Consumer Network governing council (Gill Gyte, United Kingdom) were invited to join the Consumer Stipend Committee. A fourth member, investigator, and national coordinator of the Cochrane Iberoamerican Network in Chile (Rodrigo Salinas, Chile) was designated directly by the local Organizing Committee. Finally, a member of the local Organizing Committee and of the Cochrane Iberoamerican Center (Gerard Urrútia, Spain) acted as the committee secretary. At the time of the constitution of the committee, there was no consumer representative linked to the Cochrane Iberoamerican Center available that could be incorporated to the committee, which would without a doubt been a desirable and timely action.

Given the currently existing volume of applications submitted to this committee, it is estimated that four or five people are enough to carry out tasks within the stipulated terms. It is also wise that the local Organizing Committee centers all the administrative work related to the committee as well as the handling of any required transaction (for example, flight and hotel reservation, etc.).

How were applicants scored?

For the evaluation of the applications, the committee adapted the scoring system developed by the 10th Cochrane Colloquium, with the aim to have a tool which allowed an objective scoring of all submitted applications (see Appendix 6).

Some of the difficulties faced in the design and/or use of this system were:

- a) Difficulty in establishing a clear and objective definition of the different possible levels of implication of the candidates in the Cochrane Collaboration, that allow prioritization of those with greater degree of involvement or merits.
- b) The need for expanding the number of possible categories of involvement in order to distinguish the better candidates, since on previous Colloquia the scorings of large numbers of candidates concentrated around a single value making the final decision more difficult.
- c) The number of recommendation letters from Cochrane entities that should be scored. Previously, it was assigned 1 point per support letter presented to the committee, but in our final system it was assigned only 1 point to this section, regardless of the number of recommendation letters obtained per candidate.
- d) Level of involvement with the Colloquium. The system intends to prioritize those participants that have a more significant involvement with the Colloquium, in the following order: i) Speaker in a plenary session; ii) Convenor in a workshop or speaker in a parallel session; iii) Presentation of a poster; and iv) Regular participant. However, some of the candidates confirmed their participation in some Colloquium activities after the application deadline, and since this aspect was not considered there may have been negative repercussions on the final assessment.
- e) The granting of stipends in previous Colloquia. The committee considered whether the fact of having obtained a stipend previously should be a limiting factor to obtain an aid again. Habitually, those who have obtained a stipend in a greater number of occasions are those who also have a greater level of involvement with the Cochrane Collaboration. On the other hand, if there is no limitation on the number of occasions in which a stipend can be obtained, there is the risk of creating a certain endogamy, preventing newer consumer from gaining access to stipends. Finally, it was decided to 'penalize' by subtracting 1 point to those who had obtained two or more stipends, only in cases where there was a tie among several candidates.

In short, the existing system prioritizes those candidates more actively involved with the Cochrane Collaboration, at the expense of those newcomers, excluding the external consumers to the Collaboration (some of which could be potential strategic collaborators in the future). Other alternative ways to promote attendance to the Colloquium by external consumers who are of strategic interest for the Collaboration in their potential contribution should be explored. Nevertheless, there is the difficulty of assessing adequately and objectively the possible merits and/or future expectations of candidates who are not yet involved with the Cochrane Collaboration.

All the applications were received by the committee secretary, who in a first stage selected those applications that fulfilled the criteria established in the call, discarding the rest after sending a written communication to the interested parties.

Then, it was requested to each committee member to score all the received applications. For this, a copy (pdf format) of the selected applications and of the scoring system form was sent to them. Applications were evaluated by only 3 of the committee members (Silvana Simi, Gill Gyte y Gerard Urrútia) because the othwe two had problems connecting to the Internet. Once compiled, the committee secretary calculated the average score for each candidate. In case of a discrepancy in the evaluations (defined as a score difference higher than 1 point) these should be discussed and resolved by

consensus among the committee members. Finally, a high degree of consensus was reached in the assigned scores and in the prioritization of the candidates.

After the selection process, the Consumer Stipend Committee considered that some of the matters that had already been proposed in the previous Colloquium with regard to the criteria for the final selection of candidates still need to be defined. Ideally, these criteria should be set not by each local Organizing Committee, but they should be part of a central policy applicable in all the Colloquia. See the list of issues in the Recommendations subsection.

How were stipends announced?

The information on the stipends was available at the Colloquium website (see www.colloquium.info/2003). All the necessary requirements to send an application, the dates and the procedure to follow were reported there. Furthermore, a copy of the Application Form was provided. In addition, the call through several CCIInfo issues and the rest of the Cochrane Collaboration distribution lists was reported.

Who applied for a stipend?

Thirty-five candidates sent an application to receive a stipend, from the following countries: Armenia (1), Australia (2), Canada (3), China (3), Colombia (1), Cuba (1), Denmark (1), Philippines (1), Germany (1), India (2), Israel (1), Italy (1), Kenya (2), Mexico (2), New Zealand (1), Nigeria (5), Peru (1), Poland (1), UK (1) and USA (4).

An applicant eventually received a stipend from the UK Cochrane Centers through an exclusive parallel call for consumers of the United Kingdom, after which his request was removed. Other 10 candidates did not fulfill the selection criteria established in the call and were rejected (in the majority of cases they were physicians or other health care professionals in developing countries that had not made any relevant contribution to the Cochrane Collaboration). As a result, 24 final candidates were evaluated by the committee.

Who got stipends?

The following 6 people (all of them women) were supported by the Committee:

1. Mingming Zhang, China
2. Maryann Napoli, USA
3. Ann Qualman, Canada
4. Sara Yaron, Israel
5. Nelly Orifa, Kenya
6. Marilyn Oates, New Zealand (1)

(1) Dell Horey (Australia), who initially received a stipend, resigned for health reasons, and was taken over by the first candidate on the waiting list (Marilyn Oates).

All 6 candidates initially rewarded had obtained some stipend in Colloquium precedents, five of them in the 10th Colloquium.

The result of the decision by the committee was communicated to all the candidates in March. (A model of the standardized letters is attached: Appendix 7 *Letter success, Letter unsuccessful Letter Waiting list*). All the selected candidates accepted the aid offer. However, one of them had later to resign to the aid because she got sick and was replaced by the following candidate on the waiting list.

The Practical Organisation of Consumer Stipends

Once aids were received and communicated to the candidates, hotel reservations and other logistical aspects were confirmed.

What did the Stipends Cover?

Some stipend recipients were able to pay part of their expenses by themselves. In the other cases, when stipend recipients asked us to cover all expenses, the following items were covered:

- Plane ticket
- Ground travel
- Hotel
- Registration
- Social events
- Meals

Plane Tickets

The four stipend applicants who requested for 'Plane ticket' expenses were given the choice of either organizing their own trip to Spain and being reimbursed after the Colloquium or of letting us organize their trip. For practical reasons, all of them organized and paid for their own trip and were later reimbursed.

Stipend recipients organizing their own trip were asked to send price information to the conference organizers before buying their ticket. These prices were then shown to our travel agent who helped us decide whether or not this was the cheapest alternative.

Ground Travel

The four stipend applicants who requested for 'Ground travel' expenses were given two public-transportation card that covered 20 trips in the city area. In addition, expenses of transfers from/to the airport -up to a maximum of €100- were covered.

Accommodation

At an early date, before stipend recipients were chosen, several hotel rooms were reserved at a very convenient hotel situated near the conference venue (Hotel Paral·lel). Wheelchair accessible rooms in the same hotel were also reserved. All applicants except one had requested for 'Accommodation' expenses. One of these applicants, who was traveling with her family, asked to be transferred to another hotel that was more suitable to her needs.

Social Events

Only two of the applicants requested for 'Social events' expenses. The cost of these events was paid by the organization.

Meals

Most meals were covered through hotel breakfasts, conference lunches, and social event dinners. Stipend recipients were given the choice to request for a total sum of 72 € to cover the estimated 4 additional meals not covered by the registration fee. Only two applicants requested that, and this cash was provided to them as soon as possible after their arrival in Barcelona.

Reimbursement

Stipend recipients were informed before the conference that expenses would only be reimbursed if they were accompanied by receipts.

Summary

The total sum destined to stipends for consumers amounts to €12,466, according to the following breakdown by batches as requested by each stipend recipient:

Travel (Plane ticket)	Ground Travel	Accommodation	Registration fee	Meals	Social Events
1.350	100	750	550	0	0
0	100	0	550	0	0
0	0	875	550	0	60
500	100	875	550	72	60
1.200	100	875	550	0	0
2.054	0	95	550	0	0
5.104	400	3.470	3.300	72	120

Stipend Reports

During previous colloquia the Consumer Network has asked that stipend recipients hand in reports of their activities during the Colloquium. We did not ask stipend recipients to do so this year, but this could be considered for next year. If so, the use of these reports and their expected contents should be discussed.

Recommendations

➔ For various reasons, two of the members who were part of the committee could not meet the deadline to send their evaluations. However, given the need to communicate promptly the resolution of the committee to the interested parties, the decision to carry out the final scorings was made with the 3 available evaluations. Undoubtedly, the broader the composition of the committee is and the less accessible its members are, the more difficulties there will be to carry out the evaluations within the established deadline. These aspects should be taken into account when designating the members to the committee.

➔ The committee secretary (member of the local organizing team) acted at the same time as chair, assuming the administrative work and that of the secretariat related to the committee activity, which facilitated the committee work.

- ➔ Certain aspects should be clarified related to the concession of stipends, such as:
- How should those consumers who have obtained stipends previously be assessed? Is it necessary to have a maximum score, regardless of all other merits? Should alternative funding modalities (for example, partial stipend) be offered in these cases?
 - Which should be the specific content of the recommendation letters of the Cochrane institutions? (a standard format would facilitate the objective assessment of the merits of each candidate since they would help establish a better level of involvement and participation)
 - How should the recommendation letters be scored? (1 point per letter or only 1 point in case of receiving support of at least 1 institution)

- Should some preference be given to particular consumers types? (for example, developing countries, newcomers, etc.).
- Can a single institution support more than one candidate? And in that case, should the corresponding institution establish its own priorities beforehand?
- ➔ Money could have been saved or more stipends could have been handed out by putting stipend recipients in low budget accommodation and by not paying for the social events. However, we still feel that giving stipend recipients access to the same standard of living as other participants is important enough to warrant repeating this experience.
- ➔ An information sheet explaining practical details about bus cards, administrative tasks that needed to be completed, etc would have helped avoid confusion.
- ➔ Stipend recipients that needed visas did not always take the initiative to get the process of visa application going and this can be a time-consuming process. Organizers should ensure that visa applications are sent as soon as stipends are awarded.

14- Developing countries stipends

The report presented by the Developing Countries Stipends Committee to the CPAG is provided on Appendix 8.

15- Awards

- Current Committee Chairs: Kay Dickersin (Thomas Chalmers Award), Sally Green (on behalf of Jane Silagy, Chris Silagy Award), Bongani Mayosi (Ken Warren Award).
- Whom should be asked the information that is published

The information published in the Web site of the previous Colloquium was sent to the committee chair, for its updating and verification. The updated data of members of every committee were requested from Jini Hetherington.

Recommendations

- ➔ Coordinate with those responsible for the award the date for the granting of the award, so that it suits the needs for the three parts (the one who grants it, the one who receives it and the organization).
- ➔ Update the information on the Web page of the Colloquium with the names of the last award winners and the changes in the committees.

16- Survey

The assessment survey provides feedback on the image the public has of the Colloquium, and on how they understood what the organizers intended to do. Added to the criticism concerning Colloquium aspects likely to be improved (objective failures) are the 'unfair' negative opinions related to organizational decisions which the participants did not understand (i.e. organizing 30 parallel seminars to ensure small number groups), specific cultural aspects (i.e. simultaneous translation) or participants' marginal needs or expectations (i.e. negative assessment of the conferences).

Surveys were collected during the Colloquium and taken to the secretary's office, but the specific request that was supposed to be made to the participants in the last session was overlooked, and there were practically no collected surveys *in situ* as a result. It was necessary to send a mass message *a posteriori* asking people to send the surveys by fax or mail. This process is slow and expensive in terms of staff.

Appendix 9 includes a copy of the survey carried out at the 10th and 11th Cochrane Colloquia. Appendix 8 lists a summary of the textual comments made by the survey participants; these observations will be the topic of an in-depth qualitative study by the organizing team, whose results will be presented in the Ottawa Colloquium. Below are the results of the closed questions of the survey.

- Survey results

188 surveys from 31 different nationalities were collected. All types of Cochrane entities were represented: CRG (63.3% of the respondents), Centers (22.9%), Networks (10.6%), and Methods Groups (19.7%). Unfortunately, an option for Fields was not included in the survey. By type of participant, policy makers, consumers, and TSC are the less represented groups, with less than 5% each.

The Colloquium model preferred by the participants

If all answers are considered, Barcelona is the preferred Colloquium model (35.6% of answers), followed by Stavanger (30.9%) and Lyon (22.3%). On the other hand, Barcelona is also the LEAST preferred option (18.1% of answers), followed by Lyon (14.4%) and Stavanger (11.7%).

If the preferences from participants who have attended the colloquium in Lyon and Stavanger are considered, the favorite option is the Stavanger model (40.8%), followed by Lyon (28.6%) and Barcelona (22.4%). The least preferable option is Barcelona (20.4%) followed by Lyon (10.2%) and Stavanger (2.0%).

A possible interpretation of the results would be as follows: Among the general public, there are two contradicting positions for and against the Barcelona model. The Stavanger model would be second. There is consensus among the participants to the last three colloquia as to considering Stavanger as the best model, and Barcelona as the least preferable. It is necessary to take into account that this last sample is biased, and includes people actively involved with Cochrane entities, who attended the Stavanger Colloquium.

Service to Cochrane Collaboration newcomers

Around third of the surveys were from those recently arrived to the CC (55/188, 29.3%). More than half of them recognize not having attended any of the informative sessions for newcomers (30/55, 54.5%) and one third has attended only one session (19/55, 34.5%). The sessions were attended by a small number of newcomers: Meet the entities (13/55, 23.6%), Introduction to the Cochrane Library (7/55, 12.7%), Session for Trial Search Coordinators (4/55, 7.3%), others (8/55, 14.5%). All newcomers that attended some session found it useful (25/55, 45.5%).

A quarter of the newcomers consider that some improvements should be made to the service in this group (15/55, 27.3%).

The possible selection bias in the people who have answered the survey should be considered when interpreting the results. If these results were generalizable, it would seem that the sessions for newcomers do not arouse a great interest among them, though when they decide to attend discover that sessions are worthwhile.

Assessment of the Colloquium

Responses on the duration of the Colloquium were evenly distributed as either adequate (95/182, 50.5%) and excessive (86/182, 45.7%). Only one person regarded the Colloquium as short, but it may be due to an answering error.

Most of the participants assisted to the majority of the plenaries (86/186, 54.7%), whereas one third only attended some sessions (58/186, 30.9%), and only a fifth attended all of them (38/186, 20.2%). In any case, most of the participants considered the number of plenaries adequate (145/179, 77.1%).

The Colloquium mainly addressed the interests of the participants (141/179, 78.2%) and just a small number felt disappointed (14/179, 7.8%). 13.3% declared their neutrality in this regard.

Most respondents sustain they have fulfilled their objectives partially or totally by attending the Colloquium (170/186, 91.4%). A third of the respondents fulfilled all the objectives while only one respondent did not fulfill any of his initial objectives.

Recommendations

- ➔ The survey is necessary and advisable but its results are not binding.
- ➔ Every effort should be made to ensure its fulfillment: 1) collection at the colloquium, requesting the submission during the session; 2) reminder mail sent to all participants; 3) option to fill in the form on-line at the Colloquium web site; 4) option of sending the form by e-mail or fax.
- ➔ The Colloquium models preferred by the groups of respondents are Barcelona's and Stavanger's. The Colloquium model preferred by participants of past editions is the Stavanger's.
- ➔ The length of the Barcelona Colloquium was considered excessive.

17- Logistics and Support Staff (volunteers)

Appendix 11 includes the requirements of office supplies.

The staff support plays an important role in carrying out a Colloquium of these characteristics, and it can be classified into three categories:

- **Volunteers:** Volunteers are the people who should be present and easily spotted during the Colloquium sessions, and their functions involve making sure that everything works perfectly, providing information and solving or redirecting the possible contingencies. The adequate number of volunteers is around 40 full-time people (depending on the Colloquium magnitude and length). These people should have specific responsibilities, and should also be capable of performing any required task as well as tackling unforeseen contingencies. It is advisable that these people have some kind of connection with the organizing Center and have basic knowledge of all organizational issues. It is essential that they should be clearly identified (e.g. wear showy identical T-shirts or caps, etc.) and reachable at any time by means of mobile phones. In each session there should be an easily reachable reference volunteer, who should be present during the preparation and beginning of the session and, if necessary, until it ends. It is useful to set a volunteer distribution chart per session, with a volunteer in charge of each room. Mobile phone communication between volunteers proves useful during the first day, when more unforeseen contingencies may arise.
- **Hired air hostesses/staff:** The suitable number of airhostesses would be 6 people (depending on the magnitude and length of the Colloquium). They should be placed at the front desk where registrations, delivery of documentation, change of flights and hotels, photocopies, problem solving, etc., take place. The help of some 15 volunteers will be required for the registration during the first day. A person is needed in the same place to provide general information about the city.

- Audiovisual and sound technicians: Due to the complexity of the conference and to the large number of simultaneous sessions with audiovisual requirements, a large number of technicians is necessary. Twenty people participated in our conference, which was really successful. The budget presented by these technicians was very high.
- Family doctor: 3 consultations took place and this means that it would be convenient that one of the organizers/volunteers is devoted to this due to their easy identification.

Recommendations

- ➔ Come to an agreement with the translation company, the agency, and the volunteers who will be made responsible for the receptors of simultaneous translation and who will be the ones in charge of the distribution and the reception. This task requires more time which might seem, since it is necessary to be on the alert of the material while the session is in progress.
- ➔ Identify volunteers easily (T-shirt, cap, etc.).
- ➔ Replacing hired airhostesses for volunteers linked to the organization is an economic, viable, and advisable option, if it is available.

18– Financial report

Although the financial control was initially assumed by the Technical Secretariat (Viajes Iberia), at the end we took the control of it. We always asked several budgets for every activity so we could choose between them. However, sometime there were some unexpected deviations. Some of them were caused by last minute changes, but few were unilateral decisions of the provider. It is advisable to check the bills against the budgets.

You could find below the economical results of the Colloquium. More detailed information is available on request at the Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre (Jordi Pardo, com@cochrane.es)

TOTAL EXPENSES	
CONCEPT	Euros
Scientific event (including venue renting, audiovisual requirements, catering, ...)	516.940,05 €
Other expenses (extra staff at the Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre, some social events expenses)	58.869,28 €
Previous expenses (money spent more than one year before the Colloquium)	41.146,05 €
Total euros	616.955,37 €
TOTAL INCOME	
CONCEPT	Euros
Fee's Income	467.225,50 €
Other incomes (mainly sponsors)	185.807,34 €
Total euros	653.032,84 €
FINAL RESULT	
Incomes	653.032,84 €
Expenses	616.955,37 €
Total Euros	36.077,47€

Then, we transferred to the Ottawa organisers 18.039 Euros (50% of benefits), and we should add 6.692,39 Euros, that was the money did not expend by consumer and developing countries stipends committees. Then, the total amount transferred for stipends to the Ottawa Colloquium is 24731,39 Euros

APPENDIXES

Appendix 1. Registration Fees

Type	Date	Full	Second part
Early	< 30-03-03	550 €	360 €
Full	< 30-06-03	630 €	420 €
Late	>30-06-03	700 €	460 €
On-site	>26-10-03	780 €	510 €

Appendix 2. List of awarded and denied grants: International, National, Regional

Denied Requests

Human Resources and Mobility (HRM) Activity

Marie Curie Actions - Marie Curie Conferences and Training Courses - Series of Events (SCF) and Large Conferences (LCF)

6th Framework Program

European Union

Amount requested: 140.000 €

Grants for the promotion of activities with a great concern for health issues in 2003

Ministerio de Sanidad y Consumo - Spain

Amount requested: 25.000 €

Aid Request for Special Actions

Ministerio de Ciencia y Tecnología

Secretaría de Estado de Política Científica y Tecnológica - Dirección General de Investigación - Spain

Amount requested: 83.999,64 €

Grant request to celebrate an international conference

Secretaría de Estado para la Cooperación Internacional y para Ibero-America

Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores - Spain

Amount requested: 61.047,06 €

Favorable Requests and Funding

Ajuts per to Accions Especials de Recerca (ACES) Convocatòria 2003

Dept. d'Universitats, Recerca i Societat de la Informació - Spain

Amount requested: 45.777 €

Amount collected: 20.000 €

Convocatòria d'ajuts per a la consolidació de Xarxes Temàtiques Convocatòria 2003

Dept. d'Universitats, Recerca i Societat de la Informació - Spain

Amount requested: 12.000 €

Amount collected: 8.200 €

Concessió a ACCIB d'un ajut per a l'organització d'un congrés internacional

Departament de Sanitat i Seguretat Social - Spain

Amount collected: 30.000 €

Appendix 3. List of Committees and Members

See annexed files “Annex3a Committees list.doc”, “Annex 3b Committees structure.doc”.

Appendix 4. List of Abstract Reviewers.

Monica Ausejo
Jose Asua
Marta Aymerich
Jon Deeks
Agustín Gómez
Gill Gyte
Peter Herbison
Julian Higgins
Tim Lancaster
Gillian Leng
Maria Jose Martinez
Merce Marzo
Steve McDonald
Philippa Middleton
Ros Smyth
Jimmy Volmink
Liz Waters

Appendix 5. Letter Models. Abstract Subcommittee

See annexed file “Annex 5 letters abstract subcommittee”.

Appendix 6. Scoring System Committee Consumers Stipends

See annexed file “Annex 6 Consumer stipends scoring system.doc”.

Appendix 7. Letters Committee Consumers Stipends

See annexed file “Annex 7 letters consumer stipends.doc”.

Appendix 8. Report of the Developing Countries Stipends Committee

See annexed file “Annex 8 Policy_for_DC and consumer_Stipends_for Colloquia.doc”.

Appendix 9. Survey Model

See annexed file “Annex 9 Evaluation Form.doc”.

Appendix 10. Results of the Assessment Survey

See annexed file “Annex 10 Evaluation comments.doc”.

Appendix 11. Office and other Supplies Required:

Material used during the Colloquium:

In great bulk: Pens (100), regular and double face adhesive tape (30 of each), blue-tack (10 envelopes), sheet protectors (40 packages with 500 sheet protectors), markers for transparencies (30 of each color).

Normal quantity: Diskettes (50), CD (50), transparencies (1 box of each type)

Small quantity: Staplers (2), regular markers (10 of each color)

Not used: Pencils, other devices

The photocopier and even more printers are very much used.

Computers with CD-ROM drive are necessary. We had 40 computers but at times twice as much or even more would have been necessary.

Appendix 12. Web Page:

See the address at <http://www.colloquium.info/2003>

In order to study the internal structure and Web management contact Jordi Pardo (com@cochrane.es).