

Cochrane Back Review Group

Evidence-based information on back pain and spinal disorders

Message from the Managing Editor

2008 passed in a blur for many of us in Cochrane editorial offices. RevMan 5, GRADEProfiler and the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* Version 5.0 were all released in 2008. Deciding it was best to see the final copy of the *Handbook* first, the publication of the 2008 Updated guidelines for systematic reviews in the Cochrane Back Review Group (CBRG) were held up again. We are pleased to report that the updated guidelines are now on track to be submitted to Spine early in 2009.

All protocols and reviews, previously published in RevMan 4, had to be converted to RevMan 5. Although the actual conversion was done technically, each review had to be checked, and a Risk of Bias table completed for reviews that used the 11 criteria recommended by the CBRG. Thanks to the wonderful skills and perseverance of Marie-Andrée Nowlan, with whom

some of you had the good fortune to work, we had all 56 manuscripts converted ahead of schedule.

Of course, the main duties of the editorial team focus on the production and publication of protocols and reviews. As in 2007, we published 14 protocols, new and updated reviews (see “Products in 2008” on page 4).

Supporting authors, editors and peer referees through the transition has been a challenge for all. Thanks to everyone for their patience, sense of adventure and sense of humour as we forged new ground together!

We welcomed Irina Schelkanova to our staff this October. Irina brings with her a background in finance, psychology and biophysics and experience as a research assistant at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health in Toronto, where her main duties involved co-authoring publications, and preparing grant applications and presentations. Irina works Tuesdays and

Thursdays and is slowly starting to understand the complexities of publishing a review with the CBRG! Irina will be helping me with the general activities involved in preparing manuscripts for publication, with a focus on assisting review teams who need some help to update their review.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a safe and peaceful Holiday Season and a wonderful New Year. The Editorial Office will close at 2:00 p.m. on December 24th and will re-open on Monday, January 5th.

Cheers,
Vicki

DECEMBER 2008

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Cochrane Colloquium

The 2008 Colloquium was held in the lovely university city of Freiburg, Germany. It was a wonderful opportunity to meet new people, see old friends and enjoy the countryside and some Black Forest Cake! For those who were unable to attend, please visit www.colloquium.info for the opportunity to see some of the materials presented in a range of audio-video media.

The 2009 Colloquium is scheduled for October 11th – 14th, 2009 in Singapore.

Bookmark www.cochrane.org.au/colloquium2009/

singapore.htm and visit frequently to keep abreast of details as they unfold. We will also post important dates on the CBRG website (www.cochrane.iwh.on.ca).



Upcoming conferences and meetings:

Canadian Cochrane Symposium

March 11th – 12th, 2009

Forum X

June 14th – 17th, 2009

CBRG Editorial Board Meeting

June 14th, 2009

9 a.m. to noon

Open CBRG Meeting

June 14th, 2009

1:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Low-back Pain Forum X

The 10th International Forum on primary care research on low-back pain will be held in Boston, Massachusetts on June 14th – 17th, 2009. Visit www.lbpforum.org or the CBRG website for more details.

The CBRG Editorial Board meeting is scheduled for Sunday morning, June 14th. The Open CBRG meeting will be held Sunday afternoon, June 14th with a slightly different focus this year. Because of the many Cochrane methodological and software changes

introduced this year, we will be holding a workshop for interested Cochrane authors, editors and peer referees. Details will follow as they unfold. Please do not hesitate to contact the editorial office if you have any questions Cochrane@iwh.on.ca.

Changes to *The Cochrane Library*

Some of you may remember that we used to mark updates as either 'minor' or 'substantive'. Over time, these labels lost any real value since they were used inconsistently across The Collaboration. With the release of RevMan 5 and the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* Version 5.0.1 [updated September 2008], available from www.cochrane-handbook.org, and keeping

our newly minted Impact Factor in mind, several new labels have been developed. Full details are available in Chapter 3 of *The Handbook*, but here are the highlights. The editorial office staff will help you assign the correct label(s).

Any review that has an updated literature search is labelled as an update. A new citation label is assigned if the conclusions changed as a result of the updated

literature search, if there were substantial changes to the methodology of the review, if the author by-line changed or if substantial errors were corrected. This will re-set the impact factor counter. Amendments include changes to the review that do not qualify for a new citation, such as correcting minor errors.

Canadian Cochrane Symposium

The Canadian Cochrane Symposium will be held in Halifax, Nova Scotia on March 11th – 12th, 2009. See www.wavetothefuture.ca or the CBRG website for details.

We just found out that we will have an oral presentation on *The Cochrane Back Review Group's role in translating research to practice*, a wonderful opportunity to showcase all the hard work of our authors, editors, peer referees and staff.

Congratulations to all of you!



CBRG submission dates to *The Cochrane Library* 2009

It takes up to three months to complete the editorial process and to prepare a review (either protocol or full review) for publication. Once the review team has completed and agreed upon the review, the lead author submits it to the editorial office.

This is all done now via 'Archie', the Cochrane central server. Remember that additions and revisions must be done in the file that is stored in Archie. The procedure is to 'check out' the file, make your changes and 'check in' for editorial review.

Here is an overview of important dates for 2009.

Issue	Initial peer review	Publication decision	Module/CENTRAL submission	Publication date
Issue 1, 2009	22 August 2008	8 October 2008	12 November 2008	21 January 2009
Issue 2, 2009	28 November 2008	19 January 2009	18 February 2009	15 April 2009
Issue 3, 2009	23 February 2009	9 April 2009	13 May 2009	8 July 2009
Issue 4, 2009	22 May 2009	10 July 2009	12 August 2009	7 October 2009
Issue 1, 2010	21 August 2009	9 October 2009	11 November 2009	20 January 2010

Q & A

Q. Our review team wants to hire a graduate student to help with our systematic review. What is the procedure for this?

A. PhD students are frequently involved in conducting systematic reviews, either as part of their thesis or as part-time employment. They are often trained in the methodology and are an advantage to the review team. On the other hand, Masters students have a greater variation in their knowledge, skills and experience. Therefore, as a general rule, the Editorial Board does not encourage Masters students to be key players in the consensual decision-making that is integral to each step of the review. Their lack of skills and experience put them at risk for hierarchical rather than consensual decision-making when teamed with experienced researchers. However, they can still perform impor-

tant tasks such as article retrieval, data entry and other administrative data management duties. A new document role called 'author support' may be assigned by the editorial office to acknowledge this role. The review team is ultimately responsible for deciding who will participate in the review process, however, everyone who is involved must be listed in either the author by-line or in the acknowledgement section of the review.

Q. Why do I have blank rows in my *Summary of risk of bias* figure?

A. In an attempt to differentiate data from multiple arms of a study, review authors often create a new 'included study', which is really just one of the comparisons within a multi-armed trial. Although this has always shown up as an omission in the *Characteristics of included studies* table

and the list of references, it wasn't as obvious until RevMan 5 offered the option of the *Summary of risk of bias* figure. Since data from multiple comparisons in a single trial should rarely be included in the same meta-analysis, the expectation is that only one study ID will be used (i.e. even if Glass 2001 has three comparisons [Glass 2001 Gr1 vs Gr2, Gr1 vs Gr3, Gr2 vs Gr3], the data for each analysis will be identified as Glass 2001 with the appropriate group data included).

Q. The trial did not provide sufficient data to complete a data-analysis. How do I present these results?

A. If there are insufficient data to conduct a meta-analysis, the results as presented in the paper can simply be entered into the *Characteristics of included studies* table.

(continued on page 5)

Permission to Publish Forms

Permission to publish forms are the equivalent to copyright release forms required by other journals. Once only required for reviews, review authors are now required to sign them for protocols as well. Once the decision is made that a review or protocol is ready for publication, review authors will be asked to sign and return a form to the editorial office. Officially, submission cannot continue until we receive the signed forms.

Products in 2008

Of the 12 reviews published in *The Cochrane Library* 2008, Wiley-Blackwell highlighted six through media releases and three with podcasts (identified with ♦). CBRG reviews "Surgery for degenerative lumbar spondylosis," "Rehabilitation after lumbar disc surgery" and "Massage for low-back pain" were among the Top 50 Reviews in November 2008 and "Exercise therapy

for treatment of non-specific low-back pain" was one of the Top 10 reviews in 2007.

Thank you and congratulations to all!

Links can be found on the [CBRG website](#) or on [The Cochrane Library website](#)

- Antidepressants for non-specific LBP, D Urquhart, et al ♦
- Individual patient

education for LBP, A Engers, et al ♦

- Injection therapy for subacute & chronic LBP, B Staals, et al ♦
- Low level laser therapy for non-specific LBP, R Yousefi-Nooraie, et al
- Lumbar supports for prevention and treatment of LBP, I van Duijvenbode, et al ♦

Q & A (continued)

Developing *additional data tables* offers little additional information but means a lot more work for the review team.

Q. I noticed that I made a slight mistake in the review and would like to fix it. Can you send me the RevMan file please?

A. With RevMan 5 and Archie, you no longer have to ask us to send you the RevMan file to make your amendments. As long as you have an Archie user account and the latest version of your review in Archie is not in the editorial process, you can check the latest version of your protocol/review out of Archie whenever you want to work on it - without contacting us.

The most efficient way for you to make an amendment or correction to your currently published review is:

- check the review out of Archie (open RevMan 5 >

File > Check out);

- make the edit(s) in RevMan 5;
- move the current What's New Event(s) to History (right click on the What's New Event(s) > Move to History)
- create a new 'Event' in the 'What's New' section (right click on What's New > Add Event > Amended) briefly describing the changes you have made in the Description box; and,
- check your edited version back into Archie (File > Check in) checking the box 'Submit for editorial approval'.

It is also helpful if the author checking in the review completes the 'Message to Cochrane review Group' box, describing briefly why s/he is submitting their draft for editorial approval.

By following the above steps, we will automatically receive notification that you have checked in a draft for editorial approval. We will then process your amended review for publication.

Q. You refer to the editorial office. Do you mean at Wiley?

A. No, although it can be confusing. Since Wiley-Blackwell became the publisher of *The Cochrane Library*, there has been an attempt to align the activities and names of the review group functions and personnel more closely with publishing. So, we refer to our offices at the Institute for Work & Health as the editorial office of the Cochrane Back Review Group.

Products in 2008 (continued)

- Massage for low-back pain, A Furlan et al

(continued on page 5)

- Mechanical traction for mechanical neck disorders, N Graham et al
- Neuroreflexotherapy for non-specific low-back pain, G Urrutia et al
- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for LBP, P Roelofs, et al ♦

- Patient education for neck pain with or without radiculopathy, T Haines et al

- Physical examination for lumbar radiculopathy due to disc herniation in patients with low-back pain, D van der Windt et al (DTA protocol)

- Rehabilitation after lumbar disc surgery, R Ostelo et al ♦

- Targeted manual therapy for non-specific low back pain (protocol), C McCarthy, et al

- Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) versus placebo for chronic low-back pain, A Khadilkar et al

Impact Factor and Déjà vu

Most of the time, bibliographic details like page numbers are not the main focus of our attention. But this year, the bibliographic information that uniquely identifies each CBRG review was highlighted at the editorial base, as our reviews were included in two kinds of bibliographic analysis that provided us with insight into our authors' contribution to scientific communication. First of all, Innovation Labs' Déjà vu, at UT Southwestern Medical School, analysed highly similar and duplicate citations, highlighting our commitment to keep CBRG reviews widely available and fully up-to-date. Secondly, Thompson Scientific ISI Journal Citation Reports analysed the total number of citations to Cochrane Reviews in the scientific literature in 2007, highlighting the quality of

Cochrane Reviews by assigning them a high "impact factor." Taken together, these analyses suggest that CBRG authors are communicating clearly to the scientific community.

In March 2008, Skip Garner from Innovation Labs explained in an email to our CEO Nick Royle, "that Déjà vu is ... a database of computer identified highly similar citations, some of which have been classified and annotated by humans to provide additional insight into publication practices... including those, like in The Cochrane [Collaboration], which are clearly beneficial to the community." The beneficial practices Déjà vu highlights are our continual republication of reviews with substantive updates and our co-publication agreements with specialty journals like Spine. I double-checked the database to ensure that all of

our reviews are properly annotated.

In July 2008, the Collaboration announced that our participation in Thompson Scientific ISI's Journal Citation Reports had produced a strong impact factor for the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR), *The Cochrane Library*. Calculated by dividing the number of citations to CDSR papers last year by the total number of articles published in the preceding two years, the the impact factor of 4.654 puts *The Cochrane Library* in 14th place in the "Medicine, General and Internal" category, and gives us a strong benchmark for recognition by those who use the impact factor to evaluate publication quality.

Rachel



Our mild-mannered Librarian, Rachel, posing as the 'evil librarian' at the IWH skits day, 2007.



Irina stands on the Litejny Bridge, which overlooks the Neva River, St. Petersburg, in her native Russia.



Allison, trying desperately *not* to look at the camera...

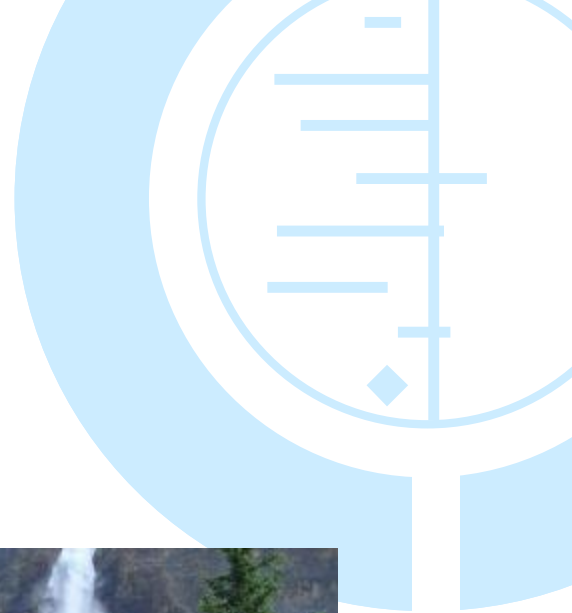


Vicki and Nabil enjoying the scenery in British Columbia, Canada.

News from The Cochrane Collaboration

In order to continue to be a source of high quality, timely research that informs clinical decision-making, the Collaboration has undertaken a number of important activities.

- A Collaboration-wide review is currently underway, led by Jeremy Grimshaw, Director, Canadian Cochrane Centre and Co-ordinating Editor, Effective Practice and Organisation of Care Review Group. See news.cochrane.org/ccsg/review for more details.
- To ensure that *The Cochrane Library* remains relevant to its users, that its quality and coverage continue to grow, The Collaboration has hired its first Editor-in-chief, David Tovey. David comes to The Collaboration from his current role as Editorial Director of the BMJ Group's 'Knowledge' division, responsible for BMJ Clinical Evidence and its sister product BestTreatments.
- Over the past year, the Co-ordinating Editors, the Trials Search Co-ordinators and the Review Group Co-ordinators have formed executive groups in an effort to improve communication between key editorial personnel and the quality of our products. Both Rachel and Vicki were invited to sit on their respective Executive Groups.



Cochrane Back Review Group

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Evidence-based information on back pain and spinal disorders

The Cochrane Back Review Group (CBRG) coordinates the publication of literature reviews of primary and secondary prevention and treatment of neck and back pain and other spinal disorders, excluding inflammatory diseases and fractures.

The CBRG is hosted by the Institute for Work & Health in Toronto, Canada and also receives operational funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH).

The CBRG Editorial Board is a policy-making body and consists of researchers, consumers and a statistician. Members also approve all titles and provide the senior peer review for select protocols and reviews. Consumer members provide consumer's perspective or assist in drafting plain language summaries for select protocols and reviews.

The Advisory Board is a subcommittee of the CBRG Editorial Board. Along with a member of the Editorial Board, Advisory Board members provide peer review for select protocols and reviews.

Visit our website for more information www.cochrane.iwh.on.ca.

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