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Cochrane on the web: a strategy for the future

The Cochrane Collaboration uses three websites to share content with internal and external audiences: cochrane.org (The Cochrane Collaboration), *The Cochrane Library* (Cochrane reviews, study registers, and related databases), and Archie (an information management system). Over time, each website has grown and developed to provide content and resources for a variety of user groups. One of the recommendations of the recent strategic review of The Cochrane Collaboration was that the Collaboration needs to “improve usability of *The Cochrane Library* and other products by diverse stakeholders”. To do this, the three web presences need to work together and identify a common strategy for future web developments.

In June 2009, the first web strategy meeting took place in London, organised by Lorne Becker (Steering Group Co-Chair), David Tovey (Editor-in-Chief), and Deborah Pentesco-Gilbert (Publisher, *The Cochrane Library*), and attended by representatives from The Cochrane Collaboration and publishers of *The Cochrane Library*, Wiley-Blackwell (Figure 1). The purposes of the meeting were to discuss how the various groups responsible for digital content management and web delivery working within The Cochrane Collaboration and in *The Cochrane Library* can work together more

Cont'd on page 2



Figure 1. Web strategy meeting participants outside The Cochrane Theatre on a pre-dinner medical history walking tour of central London. From left: Harriet MacLehose and Toby Lasserson (Senior Editor and Scientific Editor, *The Cochrane Library* Editorial Unit), Lucie Jones (Communications Officer, Secretariat), Keira McKee (Web Publishing Executive, Wiley-Blackwell), Lorne Becker (Co-Chair, Steering Group), Deborah Pentesco-Gilbert and Philippa Scoones (*The Cochrane Library* Publisher and Web Publishing Director, Wiley-Blackwell), Hans Van der Wouden (Author Representative, Steering Group), Michelle Ames (Production Editor, *The Cochrane Library*, Wiley-Blackwell), Rasmus Moustgaard (Systems Developer, Information Management System Team), David Tovey (Editor-in-Chief, *The Cochrane Library*), and Chris Mavergames (Web Operations Manager/Information Architect, cochrane.org).

Cochrane on the web (cont'd from cover)

effectively; and to consider strategic developments for the Collaboration's web presence and plan a programme of implementation. There were several goals, including the preparation of a joint Cochrane web strategy, a roadmap for the next 12 to 18 months, and agreed measures of performance.

On the first day of the two-day meeting, managers of each of the three websites described the current status and future plans. We followed with discussions about the audiences for each site and what they want from each visit. We moved to our shared vision, particularly how the sites could link together better and avoid content duplication. A discussion of publication frequency for the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)* followed. During the second day we also discussed improving communication and joint working between the managers of the three websites before developing the roadmap and practical actions.

The meeting enabled us to identify four project areas (Figure 2):

1. Clarification of content: to clarify the content for each website (to avoid duplication), who should maintain it, and how our diverse audiences can easily access the content across websites.
2. Search and browse: to develop intuitive content searches across the Cochrane websites, with seamless transitions between content on different websites; and to ensure that Cochrane content is at the top of search engine results.
3. Publication frequency: to move towards monthly publication of the *CDSR* and improve the PDF versions of Cochrane Reviews.
4. Web 2.0, RSS feeds, and email alerts: to integrate more interactive and social networking features into Cochrane websites; and to use different web-based strategies to provide content and news updates to users.

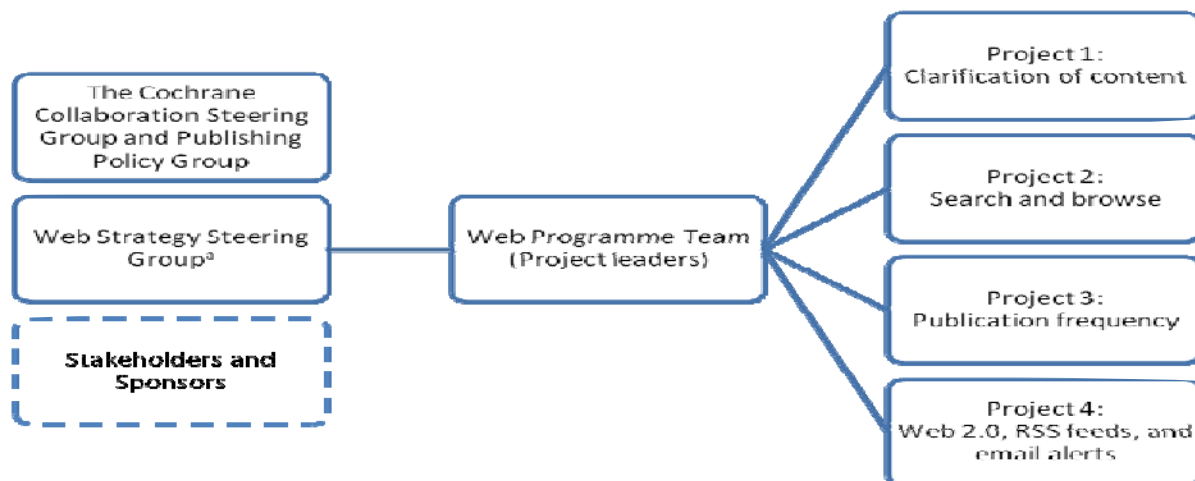


Figure 2. Organizational chart for web strategy projects
 ©David Tovey, Deborah Pentesco-Gilbert, Chris Mavergames, Monica Kjeldström, Lorne Becker, and Philippa Scoones

Each project has a leader and team which will report to the Web Strategy Steering Group and will also work with stakeholders to ensure user testing is integrated into developments. The next web strategy meeting is in August 2009. We will provide regular updates on progress and welcome your feedback. Please contact Harriet MacLehose (hmaclehose@cochrane.org) with your comments and suggestions.

Harriet MacLehose
 Senior Editor, The Cochrane Library Editorial Unit

Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

In the role of your Editor-in-Chief I have had the privilege of meeting many of you, and have delivered an action plan to the Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group. In order to help me deliver on our aspirations within the plan, I am delighted to announce three new appointments to *The Cochrane Library* Editorial Unit team based in London. They are, in chronological starting order:

Giovanna Ceroni, Business Manager (23 June 2009)

Giovanna has a wealth of editorial and management experience in medical and healthcare publishing, and her most recent role was project co-ordinator of the EURO-PREVOB consortium, based at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. Giovanna speaks several languages, including Italian, French and Portuguese. She will have a central co-ordinating role within our Editorial Unit.

Harriet MacLehose, Senior Editor (29 June 2009)

Harriet's previous work within the Collaboration includes Deputy Co-ordinating Editor with the Cochrane Infectious Diseases Group at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. More recently she has worked with Wiley-Blackwell as the Journals Editor for the *British Journal of Surgery*. Within the Collaboration, she has contributed to the 'Reviews for Africa' programme and preparation of the Cochrane Style Guide.

Toby Lasserson, Scientific Editor (27 July 2009)

Toby will work with us on a part-time basis as part of a six-month secondment from St George's University of London where he has worked since 1999. Toby will continue in his position as Managing Editor with the Cochrane Airways Group (CAG) during the secondment. He is fluent in German and is studying for an MSc in Evidence for Public Policy and Practice from the Institute of Education, London, UK.

Over the next few months we will concentrate mainly on the following projects:

Quality development

I have recently circulated a self-audit document, accompanied by draft standards for CRG processes. I hope this audit will highlight variation in practice across the Collaboration and act as a benchmark for future development.

Updating

The Updating Working Group (UWG) reported to the Steering Group in Denmark in April 2009, and the Editorial Unit now assumes responsibility for overseeing the updating process. We are very aware of the many challenges CRGs and review authors face in maintaining Cochrane reviews. We aim to come forward with proposals in the next few months, building on the work of the UWG, for consultation and implementation.

Website development

Technology is at the heart of the Collaboration and we are working to ensure that our web and digital production services work closely together to continue to deliver a premier service to the Collaboration and external users building on the findings of the user testing in Oxford and Oslo. With our colleagues from Wiley-Blackwell, we recently held a web strategy conference in London to create an outline development programme to ensure more effective joint working and co-operation between our web content producers and also to deliver much needed benefits for our customers. These benefits will include more frequent publication of the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, better site navigation, enhanced search and browse options, and improved interactivity.

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief (cont'd from page 3)

Cochrane 'response' and 'new product' development

Over the next six months we will explore the feasibility of developing a 'Responsive Review' process, as indicated within the recommendations of the strategic review. We will need to explore with internal and external stakeholders what such a service would look like, how it might be resourced and supported, and what strategic partnerships would be required to ensure the project is successful. We will explore other opportunities for developing products related to the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* which, as the strategic review indicated, is our core function.

Feedback

I hope that I will be able to work with the Feedback Management Advisory Group and CRGs to revisit and develop standards and practice for responding to customer feedback. *The Cochrane Library* was an innovator in creating web-based knowledge, with the capability to encourage 'comments and criticisms', but with the advent of Web 2.0 and user generated content, we need to ensure that we can maximise the potential interaction with users.

Podcasting

The introduction of podcasts has been an enormous success and a great tribute to the work of Mike Clarke; the Freiburg web team, in particular Chris Mavergames; many review authors and Laura Sampson from Wiley-Blackwell who has co-ordinated their collective efforts. We have recently been able to add podcasts in a range of languages and I am delighted that Mike has agreed to continue in his role as podcast editor and look forward to continuing to develop this service.

Improving Communication

We are developing a communication strategy to ensure we make the most of the opportunities for sharing ideas and receiving feedback from members of the Collaboration. We are planning to launch a blog on cochrane.org and welcome content suggestions, potential contributors and a title for the blog.

Please contact me if there are any issues you would like to discuss.

David Tovey

Editor-in-Chief, The Cochrane Library

Steering Group update on the strategic review

As noted in April's issue, the Collaboration has received a report of the first strategic review in our sixteen years of operation. The review recommendations were the result of a process that attempted to engage as many people as possible – both within and external to the Collaboration - through interviews, online surveys, a dedicated website, and a number of different activities at the Freiburg Colloquium in October 2008. More details of the process, and the full list of recommendations, were provided in the April issue of Cochrane News cochrane.org/newslett/CochraneNewsIssue45_April2009.pdf.

To formulate an appropriate response, the Steering Group scheduled a full-day discussion with Centre Directors, Co-ordinating Editors and other key Collaboration members in Vedbæk Denmark on 24 April 2009. This was followed by a detailed discussion with Jeremy Grimshaw the next day. The resulting subsequent Steering Group decisions are:



Cont'd on page 5

Steering Group update (cont'd)

Primary purpose

We have accepted all of the review recommendations on behalf of the Collaboration and committed ourselves to taking the lead in implementing each of them. In keeping with the first recommendation, **we have reaffirmed the Collaboration's primary purpose to be the production of *high quality systematic reviews*.**

Priority issues

We identified several additional high priority issues highlighted by the recommendations. We agreed with the review's second recommendation that training, methods development and advocacy for evidence-based decision making should be among the key additional purposes of the Collaboration and have set up a separate working group to address each of these issues. The Cochrane Training Working Group, which held its first meeting in Cambridge in July 2008, will take the lead on the training issue. Three other high priority recommendations (those dealing with the development of a 'rapid review' process, the development of a broad-based education program based on Cochrane reviews, and the development of other new products) were delegated to our new Editor-in-Chief, David Tovey.



Invitation to participate

In discussing the remaining recommendations, it has become clear that the participatory broad-based approach used for the review itself, under the direction of the Steering Group, will be needed in forming effective, engaging strategies for their development and implementation. A meaningful response to the review requires the expertise, commitment and involvement of individuals and entities across the Collaboration and cannot be accomplished by members of the Steering Group alone. We have therefore set up a number of working groups, each of which will address one or more of the remaining recommendations.

We would like to invite Collaboration members to pick one or more working groups and . . .

... GET INVOLVED

We are setting up a wiki page for each working group, giving details about the members and the issues under discussion

ccreview.wikispaces.com/RECOMMENDATION+WORKING+GROUPS

- you can leave comments or suggestions
- volunteer to join a group by contacting one of the listed individuals
- insert your comments directly using the 'Discussion' tab at the top of each page

Alternatively, please feel free to email me (LorneBecker@gmail.com) or any member of the Steering Group with your input.

The Executive is reviewing the progress of the working groups in each of its conference calls, and we intend to report our progress and plans in more detail in a variety of ways during the Colloquium in Singapore this October.

Lorne Becker

Co-Chair Cochrane Collaboration, Steering Group

Update from the Monitoring and Registration Group (MRG)

The MRG held its most recent meeting in Bahrain in late May, at the invitation of Zbys Fedorowicz, a CRG representative on the MRG and Steering Group, and Director of the Bahrain Branch of the UK Cochrane Centre. We would like to extend our thanks to Zbys and his wife, Ruri, for their excellent hospitality during our stay, including a dinner party at their home near Manama, Bahrain's capital city, at which we got to sample Ruri's legendary chili con carne!

At this meeting we welcomed Nicole Skoetz, representing Managing Editors, and Jason Wasiaak, representing Fields and Networks. Rob Scholten, Co-Convenor of the Group, announced that he will be stepping down at our next meeting at the Singapore Colloquium, but will remain in the Group as a Centre representative. Rob has graciously agreed to mentor his successor, Karen New, in the lead up to this meeting in October. Karen was unanimously elected by the Group and will have a dual role as Co-Convenor alongside Hans van der Wouden, whilst remaining an author representative, for which she was appointed to the MRG. Our heartfelt thanks go to Rob for his outstanding convenorship over the past three years, and our congratulations to Karen on her election.

... we have already begun to develop clearer, standardised key performance indicators that will facilitate the assessment of entities ...

As well as conducting our core business of reviewing the sustainability and progress of each of the Collaboration's 52 review groups (monitoring is alternated annually between CRGs and all other entities), we discussed, in detail, the implications of the Strategic Review's Recommendations Report for the MRG. In particular, we recognised the criticism that the monitoring process "lacks real 'teeth'" in dealing with under-performance by entities, and indeed, that it may be unclear "on what [criteria] [entity] performance is being assessed" and therefore, how performance and under-performance can be measured.¹

In response, under the strategic leadership of the Steering Group to which the MRG reports, and in collaboration with the entities themselves, we have already begun to develop clearer, standardised key performance indicators that will facilitate the assessment of entities against their defined core functions and the broader goals of the Collaboration as a whole, which are also being clarified in light of the review's recommendations.

However, it must be remembered that the Collaboration is a uniquely complex organisation, whose entities vary widely in their financial and human resources, and who maintain multiple commitments to their associated institutions and funders, as well as to the Collaboration. As such, generalised quantitative performance goals would be unworkable and uninformative. We argue for the continued relevance of the MRG's detailed and individual monitoring of entities, which will allow for the development of individually tailored target setting in the context of the goals of the Collaboration as a whole: as its primary goal, to improve health care globally through the production of high quality systematic reviews.

With greater clarity on what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable performance, the MRG will be in a better position to show its 'teeth' (for both growling and smiling!), taking positive action to resolve issues affecting an entity, and consequently, the Collaboration as a whole.

¹The Cochrane Collaboration. A Strategic Review: Recommendations Report. 16 Feb 2009.

Karen New (Incoming Co-Convenor), Rob Scholten (Outgoing Co-Convenor) and Hans van der Wouden (Co-Convenor), Monitoring and Registration Group

First Cochrane symposium in the Arabian Gulf

To coincide with the Monitoring and Registration Group's meeting, the Bahrain Branch of the UK Cochrane Centre (UKCC) hosted the first Cochrane symposium held in the Arabian Gulf (1-2 June 2009), on the topic of 'evidence-based medicine and health promotion: research into practice'. The two-day event was jointly organised by the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE, UK), under the patronage of Bahrain's Prime Minister, Sheikh Khalifah bin Sulman Al Khalifah, and located at the newly opened Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland—Medical University of Bahrain. Speakers included Dr J M Al Bareeq, Chief Editor of the Bahrain Medical Bulletin; Nick Royle, CEO of the Collaboration; and Andrew Dillon, Chief Executive of NICE.

The event generated significant press coverage and was well attended by people from all over the region. Zbys Fedorowicz, Director of the Bahrain Branch of the UKCC, noted the contribution of Cochrane authors from the area, and particularly from Bahrain, whose reviews on topics such as sickle-cell disease and colorectal cancer have been used to inform healthcare policy in many countries around the world.



The newly opened Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland—Medical University of Bahrain

Zbys Fedorowicz, CRG representative on the MRG and Steering Group

The Cochrane Library makes an impact

The results for the 2008 impact factor are in and citations are on the rise. The *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* has an impact factor of 5.182; up from 4.654 in 2007. This has allowed the database to move up two positions to 12th out of 107 in the ISI category Medicine, General & Internal.

To learn more about the impact factor and *The Cochrane Library's* rankings, please visit http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/homepages/106568753/IF_FAQs.pdf

Diagnostic Test Accuracy Review Training in Canada

With The Cochrane Collaboration now undertaking reviews of diagnostic test accuracy (DTA) and recognising the need for training in Canada, Dr Madhukar Pai (Editor the Cochrane Infectious Diseases Review Group and based at McGill University) and Dr Mariska Leeflang (Joint Coordinator of the Cochrane Diagnostic Test Accuracy Working Group and based at the University of Amsterdam) co-taught a two-day workshop on conducting DTA reviews in May 2009. The Respiratory Epidemiology & Clinical Research Unit at the Montreal Chest Institute and McGill University organised the workshop with the support of the Cochrane Infectious Diseases Group and in collaboration with the Canadian Cochrane Network and Centre (CCNC).



of

The complete course outline is available at medicine.mcgill.ca/epidemiology/pai/

The instructors addressed formulating a DTA review question, searching for and appraising studies, extracting data, and conducting meta-analyses, including the strengths and limitations of various meta-analytic methods. They provided demonstrations with various software programs, including RevMan 5, using real examples.

The workshop was well attended with 27 participants who were mainly from Canada, but also from the US and UK. Six of those were from various Cochrane entities connected with the CCNC. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, although several participants expressed a need for additional hands-on exercises and computer sessions.

Dr Leeflang also conducted a follow-up workshop on the third day for the Cochrane entities. She provided consultation on potential review topics, an overview of the editorial process and support units, and a focused demonstration of RevMan 5.

The Cochrane Inflammatory Bowel Disease and Functional Bowel Disorders Review Group and the Canadian satellite of the Cochrane Upper Gastrointestinal and Pancreatic Diseases Review Group are each planning to undertake a DTA review within their respective editorial teams. Authors from the Cochrane Back Review Group formed one of the pilot DTA review teams within the Collaboration and are heading into the final editorial phase of their review.

For more information regarding the Diagnostic Test Accuracy Working Group (DTAWG), visit: srdta.cochrane.org/en/index.html.

Madhukar Pai, Cochrane Infectious Diseases Review Group
Mariska Leeflang, Cochrane Diagnostic Test Accuracy Working Group
Adrienne Stevens, the Canadian Cochrane Network and Centre

Update from the Cochrane Adverse Effects Methods Group

This has been a busy year for the Cochrane Adverse Effects Methods Group. We had workshops in Milan, Freiburg, Amsterdam (thanks to Rob Scholten), Edinburgh and Austria, which were excellent opportunities to help review authors tackle adverse effects. More workshops will be held in October 2009 at the Colloquium in Singapore.

Andrew Herxheimer spoke on adverse effects at the US Cochrane Center conference on Prioritising Systematic Reviews. A podcast is available at apps1.jhsph.edu/cochrane/NSvideopodcastol.htm.

Su Golder (Medical Research Council Fellow in Health Services Research) has also spearheaded some important methodological work in the adverse effects arena. One overview looked for evidence of biased reporting of adverse effects data in pharmaceutical industry-funded studies.¹ Su and Yoon Loke concluded that the raw data were adequate, but had serious concerns about the subjective interpretation of the safety data, which could potentially be biased to favour the sponsor's drug.

Identifying adverse effects data is a particular challenge and Su's upcoming overview in the *Journal of the Medical Library Association* will describe the pros and cons of the various strategies that can be used. Sad to say (and perhaps not unexpectedly), Su and Yoon conclude that no single strategy covers all angles, and the time and resources available will determine the most appropriate choice.

We welcome questions from review authors or editors: please email Yoon Loke (y.loke@uea.ac.uk) or Andrew Herxheimer (a.herxheimer@ntlworld.com) as Su is now on maternity leave.

¹Br J Clin Pharmacol. 2008 Dec;66(6):767-73.

Andrew Herxheimer
Adverse Effects Methods Group

Understanding The Cochrane Collaboration

Catriona Bourne Swinton Hunter has just finished her secondary education at Tudor Hall, a school in Banbury, England. She spent a week at the Secretariat in Oxford, UK, in late June working on various projects, including updating the Collaboration's introductory leaflets and analysing the Collaboration's websites. Her final task of the week was to write an article summarising her experience and understanding of the Collaboration. Her words highlight the challenges the Collaboration faces in marketing itself and its products to diverse audiences. This issue was also raised in the strategic review and is being actively addressed by the Steering Group, in partnership with key stakeholders including the Web Team, Editorial Unit, Secretariat, and Wiley-Blackwell.



Being a fifteen-year-old girl is hard, especially when you're looking for work. Of course, this isn't a full-time permanent job being looked for, only a week's work experience. But I was glad when I heard that I might be able to work in the Secretariat of The Cochrane Collaboration for a week.

However, my relief at finding I had a place to go soon gave way to a little apprehension. What actually *was* this organisation? I tried typing it into Google and soon my apprehension turned to more than a little

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Understanding The Cochrane Collaboration (cont'd from page 9)

confusion. Was a Cochrane Centre the same as The Cochrane Collaboration? And why was it trying to advertise a library?

It was only when I started my work experience that I fully understood. After a more careful look around the Collaboration's website (yes, by now I had realised it was cochrane.org and not the *Library* or entity websites that I needed) I realised that The Cochrane Collaboration was responsible for information on something with relevance to us all: health care. I wondered why I hadn't heard of it before. This was a worldwide organisation working to help everybody all around the globe!

I was overwhelmed by the friendly atmosphere and desire to work together as a group that I experienced in the Collaboration. Anybody could get involved, whether as a consumer or as a clinician. Each of the Collaboration's websites was full of detailed, reliable information, and it was freely accessible to thousands of people!

The daunting question to a newcomer is: *how* does it improve health care? The thing is, the Collaboration helps in so many different ways it's difficult to get an overall picture in your mind. It becomes clearer once you have worked within the organisation, but to an outsider it can be a little confusing. It didn't take long, however, to become knee-deep into a world of web pages, reviews and Colloquia.

Overall, my work experience with the Secretariat was thoroughly enjoyable and instructive. I definitely no longer feel an 'outsider'.

Catriona Bourne Swinton Hunter

Cochrane Secretariat (work experience, 22-26 June 2009)

The Cochrane Author Survey

The aim of this survey was to better understand the review process from the authors' perspective to identify strategies which could improve the process for authors and Cochrane Review Groups. The objectives were to identify: problems and barriers for authors of Cochrane reviews and protocols, resources that had been helpful for authors, and strategies that could improve the process for authors.

An online survey was advertised to all authors of published protocols and reviews, CCNet, and the Cochrane website. Data were collected from August to October 2008. All responses were anonymous. Sixty-seven per cent of the 1784 authors who responded said they would do another review with the Collaboration and 88% agreed that 'Overall, working with The Cochrane Collaboration as an author has been a positive experience'. A high proportion (88%) of authors acknowledged the support that had been given to them by their Review Group. Training was also considered helpful, but limited access to training was a problem for many authors and a common suggestion for improved support. Online methods of training were suggested by a number of authors. Time was the biggest problem for authors being cited by 96% of respondents.

Overall, although most authors were very positive about their experience with the Collaboration, this needs to be taken in context with the low overall response rate. Barriers and possible solutions identified by respondents can be used to inform strategies (which are currently being created) which may improve the process of authoring a Cochrane review for authors and those that support authors. A full copy of the results and recommendations of the Author Survey and a copy of the survey can be found at: http://www.cochrane.org/resources/author_survey_report_2009.htm

Donna Gillies, Author Representative of the Steering Group

Cochrane gets ultimate 'Shout Out' in Newsweek

Newsweek's Senior Science Writer, Sharon Begley, describes the important work The Cochrane Collaboration is doing in *A Science Fact Check*. As she writes, "Really, with more than 2,000 such reviews on everything from the common cold to cancer already completed, Cochrane has shown that comparative-effectiveness research works."

Visit newsweek.com/id/205616 to read the full article.



Reviews for Africa Programme: What 5 years of RAPping did for Africa

In 2005, the South African Cochrane Centre (SACC), in collaboration with the Cochrane Infectious Diseases and HIV/AIDS Review Groups, began the Reviews for Africa Programme (RAP), funded by the Nuffield Commonwealth Programme. The aim of the programme is to provide training and support to successful applicants from 24 eligible African countries to complete Cochrane reviews. It also aims to develop research capacity and promote evidence-based health care (EBHC) policy and practice in the region.

RAP consists of three phases (Table 1, page 12), and successful completion of each phase leads to progression to the next. Two phases are intense courses conducted at the SACC. Participants are also linked to an experienced Cochrane author who provides guidance and methods expertise. The strategic focus of reviews from this programme is on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other diseases and issues relevant to Africa.

Since 2005, 25 participants (from Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zimbabwe) have joined the programme (Figure 1, page 12). All participants have attended a four-week intensive protocol development course and, to date, 23 have attended the three-week review completion course. Nine reviews and 24 protocols have been published in the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* as a result.

Authors training others

Furthermore, since completing the two intensive courses, participants are active in conducting presentations and facilitating workshops on EBHC in their home countries, and training under- and postgraduate students on the principles of research synthesis. Successful three-day courses on systematic reviews and meta-analysis have been held in Cameroon and Malawi. In October 2007, a two-day workshop on translating research into policy and practice was convened by participants based in Kenya. Participants are also actively sharing the knowledge they gained by mentoring new Cochrane authors and coauthoring Cochrane reviews. In Nigeria, there is interaction and dialogue with the Nigerian Branch of the SACC and participants are instrumental in the implementation of RAP Nigeria.

RAP is an important training model integrating components of comprehensive on-site training and distance support. Cochrane Review Groups might consider how they can build on this approach in partnering with skilled groups in poorer countries to promote research synthesis.



Taryn Young and Elizabeth Pienaar, South African Cochrane Centre

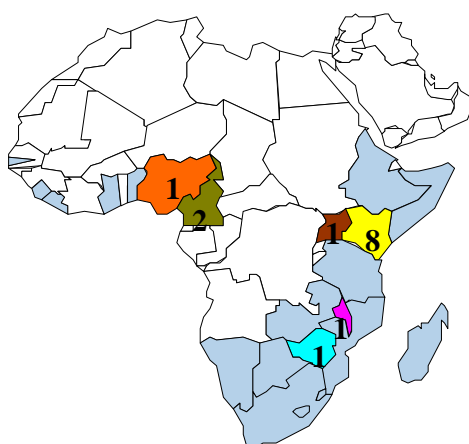
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What 5 years of RAPPing did for Africa! (cont'd from page 11)

Table 1. Phases of Reviews for Africa Programme

Phase 1: Development of a protocol for a Cochrane Review alongside training in research synthesis	Phase 2: Publication of the protocol and initial preparation of the Cochrane Review	Phase 3: Cochrane Review finishing school
Objective: To equip participants with knowledge and research synthesis skills necessary for initiating, completing, and maintaining a Cochrane review.	Objective: To complete protocol and draft the full Cochrane review.	Objective: To complete the Cochrane review and send it off for peer review.
Outline: A combination of seminars, workshops, computer sessions, tutorials, and individual study will enable each participant to complete the protocol of a Cochrane review to the stage where it is ready to be sent off for peer review. Furthermore, participants will have gained the knowledge and skills required to continue the review with ongoing support from the SACC.	Outline: Individual study at participant's home institution with support from the SACC.	Outline: Protected time for individual study supplemented with seminars and tutorials.
Duration: Four weeks	Duration: Six to eight months	Duration: Three weeks
Location: SACC, Cape Town, South Africa	Location: Participant's home institution	Location: SACC, Cape Town, South Africa

Figure 1: Where do RAPPers come from?



RAP Nigeria

RAP Nigeria will start October 19-30, 2009 and will consist of three phases. Applications are invited from suitably qualified individuals. **DEADLINE FOR APPLICATIONS IS 4 p.m., 11 September 2009.** Successful applicants will be informed in writing by 30 September 2009. To receive an application form or the full advertisement/eligibility criteria, contact cochranenigeria@yahoo.co.uk and copy emmanueleffa@yahoo.co.uk and dremeka31@yahoo.com.

Cochrane Collaboration makes inroads on best evidence for slum upgrading

Increasing the number of reviews relevant to global health is an important goal of the Collaboration. It relates to our capacity to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals; the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health; to frame questions of importance to developing country populations and addresses the overall need to meet the evidence needs of global health decision makers. One of the major priority areas for developing countries are decisions related to private and public investment and programs to improve the lives of slum dwellers and slum upgrading.

The Public Health Review Group (PHRG) focuses on building the evidence in topics relevant to low- and middle-income countries as well as interventions that address the social determinants of health (or causes of causes) with a focus on equity and health inequalities. Scoping a potential review and the methodological challenges involved with synthesizing such evidence brought all the PHRG editors to London in mid-May to work through an exemplar review on slum upgrading. Discussions ranged from logistics of searching intersectoral databases, methodological innovations for integrating outcomes and views of various stakeholders, definitional minefields, and outcome measurement considerations to, and most of all, the synthesis of findings from mixed methods, interventions and outcomes.

The focus of the two-day meeting was to work through each element of the protocol and review in relation to the topic area. The enthusiasm generated a desire for editorial co-authorship and location of the lead authorship of the review with our Developing Country Editor, Dr Ruhi Saith. Ruhi is based in India and is looking to position the review as a potential PhD topic for a student from within her team. The early findings and associated methodological challenges will be presented at a meeting in India in early 2010 with a view to publication of the review mid-2010. For more information on the review, please contact Ruhi Saith (ruth.saith@gmail.com).



Elizabeth Waters, Rebecca Armstrong, Jodie Doyle, Ruhi Saith, Ruth Turley (Public Health Review Group)

Reviewing consumer participation

We are in an environment in which “increasing importance is being given to patients’ views of the humanity and effectiveness of health care”.¹ Health systems are increasingly evidence-based and underpinned by evidence informed policy making. Yet evidence is often limited and cannot stand alone. Expertise and value judgement are essential parts of informed decision-making.

CCNet sets out to: increase consumers’ capacity to participate, make information accessible to consumers, share good evidence-based information with other consumers, and make a difference.

As part of the evidence base, it is important that we evaluate the diverse roles that consumer and community participation can play. Consumer representatives bring with them their skills, experiences and knowledge and the views of a wider healthcare user group. We work with differing roles, levels of involvement, settings, support and training, backgrounds and characteristics of the people involved, and group dynamics. The impact of the contributions by consumers can be varied and sometimes not immediately obvious, their participation adds value and is best developed in partnership.

Cont’d on page 14

Reviewing consumer participation (cont'd from page 13)

With Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group discretionary funding (2009), CCNet has co-opted the services of a UK consultant, working with a small project team of CCNet members with the required expertise, to review consumer participation in Cochrane Review Groups. We are using a best-practice model and are working closely with a multi-stakeholder Project Advisory Group (internal to the Collaboration). This Group has been vital in strengthening the information obtained from two electronic surveys, one for Review Groups and the other for consumers. We have received an excellent response rate from Review Groups through the Managing Editors (a total of 47 out of 52) and a good response from consumers. The surveys will be followed up by selected semi-structured telephone interviews. These are to be carried out by the external consultant on the advice of the Project Advisory Group.

Join us at the Singapore Cochrane Colloquium (Sunday 11 October, 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) for a 'Discussion of the findings of the review of CCNet in working with Review Groups and how we can move forward'.

¹Black N, Jenkinson C. Measuring patients' experiences and outcomes [Analysis] *BMJ* 2009;339:b2495

Janet Wale, Maria Belizan, Jane Nadel (CCNet) and Bec Hanley (external consultant, CCNet)

Cochrane Library Editorial Unit and Secretariat meet

David Tovey brought his team nearly up to full complement in June. He and his staff at the Cochrane Library Editorial Unit (CLEU) in London came to spend a day with the Secretariat in Oxford on 30 June 2009 to get to know each other and learn about each other's roles and responsibilities.

As seen in photo; left to right: Harriet MacLehose (CLEU Senior Editor), Hilary Wilson (CLEU PA), David Tovey (Editor-in-Chief); Jini Hetherington, Lucie Jones, Nick Royle and Claire Allen (Secretariat); Giovanna Ceroni (CLEU Business Manager).

Missing: Toby Lasserson (who joined the CLEU at the end of July), and Anne Giles (who joined the Secretariat in mid-May).



The Opportunities Fund: successful applicants

The Steering Group is pleased to announce the funding of three projects from the most recent round of the Opportunities Fund:

- A course for Cochrane statisticians: Addressing advances in meta-analytical techniques
Doug Altman, Statistical Methods Group; 16,500 GBP
- Cochrane training: Developing a core collection of approved training and support materials
Steve McDonald, Australasian Cochrane Centre; 48,997 AUD
- Evaluation of The Cochrane Collaboration's Risk of Bias Tool
Jonathan Sterne, Bias Methods Group; 29,354 GBP

The successful applicants are to be congratulated on the high quality of their proposals. We look forward to the results of their proposed projects, which will be communicated to the Collaboration in due course. We also thank all applicants to the Fund for the time and effort put into their submissions.

Cochrane Policy Manual updates

The online version of the Policy Manual has been updated and is now available on our website at cochrane.org/admin/manual.htm where a downloadable PDF version is also available. The following are the most recent changes:

Global replacement of 'Review Group Co-ordinator' with '**Managing Editor**'

Section 1.1.2.6 - Publication Arbiter (**update**)

Section 1.1.2.9 - CRG executives (**new**)

Section 1.5.3 - Discretionary Fund (**update**)

Section 2.1.4.3 - Process for selecting the location of Cochrane Colloquia (**new**)

Section 3.1.4 - Advisory Groups to the CCSG - Quality Advisory Group (**update**)

Section 3.3 - Centres (**update**)

Appendix 2, Annex A2.C - Major and minor changes to entities (**update**)

Appendix 3 - Contact information at John Wiley & Sons Ltd (Wiley-Blackwell) (**update**)

Request for Proposals for the Cochrane Register of Studies released

In late June 2009, the Steering Group released the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the development of the new *Cochrane Register of Studies* (CRS).

The CRS has the potential to revolutionise the way we assemble CENTRAL (the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials), the Collaboration's repository of references to trial reports. CENTRAL is updated by combining the data contained in entities' specialised registers, together with records from other bibliographic databases such as MEDLINE and EMBASE, and is the primary reference source for authors of Cochrane systematic reviews.

Based on the report of the CENTRAL Vision Group, informed by our experience of operating the 'interim measures' for the assembly of CENTRAL, and guided by considerable consultation, the RFP seeks proposals to deliver a new online system for entities to manage their specialised registers, and from which the data for CENTRAL will be aggregated. Crucially, the new system will house both studies and reference-based records in the same database, and will make the aggregation process simpler and more efficient.

Should you have any queries about the RFP process, please contact Lucie Jones at the *Register's* designated email address registerofstudies@cochrane.org. Updates will be communicated to the Collaboration in due course. [The deadline for receipt of proposals was 31 July 2009].

Lucie Jones, Secretariat

Submission deadline for next issue of Cochrane News:

Monday, 9 November 2009

**Please email articles (500 words max.), pictures and
announcements to cochrane@uottawa.ca**

COCHRANE NEWS**News, announcements and events**

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17th Cochrane Colloquium

11-14 October 2009

Suntec Singapore International Convention & Exhibition Centre, Suntec City

Visit colloquium09.com for more information on plenaries, workshops, etc.

**15th Annual Meeting of UK and Ireland-based Contributors to The Cochrane Collaboration, 2-3 March 2010**

City Hall, Cardiff

Further details at cochrane.co.uk

Caroline Rouse, Administrator, UK Cochrane Centre
For information on UK Cochrane Centre training see cochrane.org/news/workshops.shtml

Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group election results

New representatives will join the Steering Group for three years. Results will be made official at the Singapore Colloquium.

Representing Centre staff: Mary Ellen Schaafsma (Canada)

Representing Trials Search Co-ordinators: Gail Higgins (Australia)

Representing Co-ordinating Editors: Sophie Hill (Australia)

Representing the Consumer Network: Mingming Zhang (China)

Call for Nominations – Bill Silverman Prize

William (Bill) Silverman (1924-2004) was one of the founders of American neonatal medicine. As he reiterated frequently, criticism is a form of trouble making that can help to drive progress. With the approval of Bill's family, the agreement of the Steering Group and a start-up donation from Iain and Jan Chalmers, the Bill Silverman Prize was established in 2008 in his honour and to continue this tradition. The Prize acknowledges explicitly the value of criticism of The Cochrane Collaboration, with a view to helping to improve its work and achieve its aim of helping people make well-informed decisions about health care.

The Prize is a cash award of US 1000 and a certificate. It is awarded annually to the author(s) of a relevant publication or presentation .

Nominations can be made by anyone, including the authors of the publication or presentation being nominated. Nominations must be received by the co-chairs of the Prize committee, Cindy Farquhar and Suzanne Hill (c.farquhar@auckland.ac.nz and hills@who.int) by email before 28 August 2009. The Prize recipient(s) will be announced at the Cochrane Colloquium in Singapore in October 2009. Please visit cochrane.org/docs/prizes.htm#BSP for application criteria and details of last year's Prize recipient.