

- **What is qualitative research?**
- **What role could it have in Cochrane?**
- **What challenges arise for CC if qualitative research is taken seriously?**

**Questions for debate and discussion
not answers!**



It isn't...

- **A way of measuring quality of life**
- **A methods tool-kit**
- **Always small scale**
- **Anything that includes the consumers' voice**
- **The easy option for the non-numerate!**



It is a method of scientific enquiry that..

- Illuminates why people act in the way they do and how action is shaped by social contexts
- Dependent on conceptual not numerical analysis
- Generalisable on basis of theory not statistical probability



What role can qualitative research have in the collaboration?

- **Improving** effectiveness reviews
- **Extending** beyond questions of effectiveness:





Improving Effectiveness Reviews

E.G.

Helping to identify meaningful outcomes

Physiotherapy interventions to improve continence

» **Dignity v quality of life**



Extending Cochrane reviews:

Questions that QR might address:

- **Are interventions aimed at the ‘right’ problem?**
- **How can evaluated interventions be improved?**
- **How are effective interventions implemented in ‘real life’**

Two examples



The case of Directly Observed Therapy (DOTS) for the treatment of Tuberculosis



➤ **DOTS:** WHO branded package of interventions including observing people take medication

➤ **Cochrane Review:** reported absence of evidence for or against DOTS compared with people treating themselves

Volmick & Garner, 1997/02/06 CE003343

➤ **Systematic review of qualitative research** on factors shaping people's help seeking behaviour

Noyes & Popay, Journal of Advanced Nursing forthcoming



What does the Qualitative Research systematic review contribute?

- **Questions appropriateness of interventions that assume**
 - **Barriers to cure are cultural**
 - **Patients are irresponsible**
- **Highlights other barriers:**
 - **material e.g. poverty**
 - **Stigma**
 - **Social relationships of care**
- **Reveals resourcefulness of people despite the barriers**
- **Aids interpretation of results of trials in Cochrane review**
- **Suggests ways of improving interventions: e.g. more support less inspection**



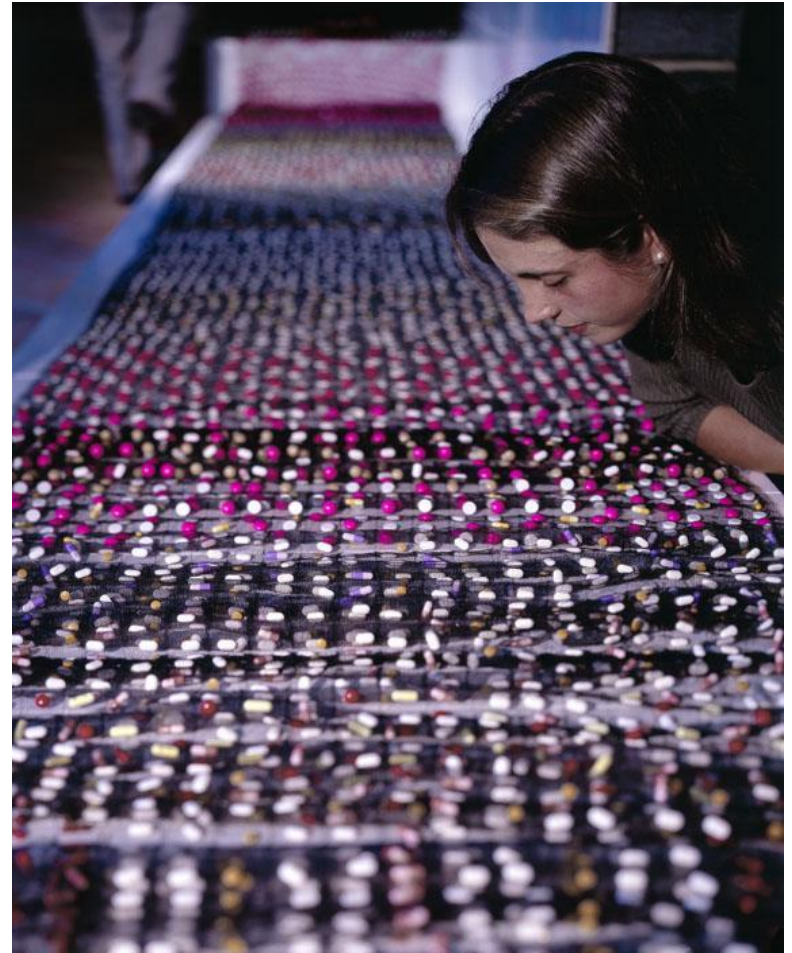
The case of medicine taking

➤ Many Cochrane reviews focus on

- effectiveness of medicines
- improving compliance

➤ Qualitative research review on medicine taking & compliance

Pound P et al. *Social Science & Medicine* 2005;61:133-155





Rethinking non-compliance:

- **Four types of medicine taking strategies two involving **active resistance**:**
 - **passive accepters;**
 - **active accepters,**
 - **active modifiers**
 - **rejecters.**

- **So what?**
 - **Do study results reflect the impact of these strategies through randomisation?**
 - **Can systematic reviews take account of this behavioural diversity?**
 - **What are the implications for implementation of ‘effective’ medicines?**

- **Is the effectiveness of medicines best maximised by:**
 - **Promoting compliance with ‘recommended’ regimes**
 - **Working with patients to support active acceptance and modification**



Including qualitative research in Cochrane reviews: methodological challenges

- **Need to focus on the right challenges: the bridge in the distance not the edges of the sign**

- **Systematic reviews of qualitative research can be:**
 - Systematic
 - Transparent
 - And involve 'consumers'

- **But other aspects of qualitative research review process different to established practice in Cochrane**



How the practice of effectiveness reviews and qualitative research review differ

- ***Protocol:*** an enabling framework not a straight jacket
- ***Review question(s):*** may be revised as review proceeds
- ***Review process:*** iterative not linear and/or staged
- ***Searching:*** not always comprehensive, may involve sampling
- ***Inclusion:*** on basis of methodological quality contentious.
- ***Reproducibility:*** not inevitable
- ***Qualitative research expertise:*** essential



Including qualitative research in Cochrane reviews: Organisational Challenges:



- **Need discussion about:**
 - Approach to & content of guidance
 - How product of QR reviews are included in review reports and the CC library
 - How reviewers are supported
- **When two ‘rivers’ meet**
 - There will be some turbulence but
 - Change & adaptation can create a new and more substantial river