

# Steering Group Bulletin

Reporting the latest news from the Collaboration's Steering Group

NOVEMBER 2009

No. 9

## YOUR STEERING GROUP (CCSG):

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SOPHIE HILL and ROGER SOLL (Co-ordinating Editor Representatives);

LIZ WHAMOND and MINGMING ZHANG (Consumer Network Representatives);

ZBYS FEDOROWICZ and HANS VAN DER WOUDE (CRG Representatives);

KATRINA WILLIAMS (Field and Network Representative); SONJA HENDERSON (ME Representative);

JULIAN HIGGINS (Methods Group Representative); GAIL HIGGINS (TSC Representative)

## INTRODUCTION FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

LORNE BECKER and JONATHAN CRAIG

The Steering Group has recently returned from the Collaboration's Colloquium in Singapore, buoyed by the energy and enthusiasm of the many participants who attended the event. Every year our Colloquium proves to be a fantastic opportunity for sharing ideas and experiences, and for building the scientific and social relationships that hold together a diverse and dispersed group of people with the common aim of improving healthcare decision-making globally.

This year's Colloquium had a unique energy, reflecting the event's first visit to Asia, the recent appointment of *The Cochrane Library's* first Editor in Chief, and the publication since the previous Colloquium of the recommendations from the Collaboration's first Strategic Review. Our thanks to Edwin Chan and his team, and staff of the Australasian Cochrane Centre, for organising such a successful event. We look forward to next year in Keystone, USA, where the vibe will be less city, more mountain!

This year's Colloquium provided the opportunity for Jeremy Grimshaw, director of the Strategic Review, to complete his handover of the Review to the Collaboration under the leadership of the Steering Group. An article summarising how that Group is leading the implementation of the Review's recommendations will be published in the Collaboration's newsletter, *Cochrane News*, later this month, and you can read a shorter summary in this issue of the Bulletin (Page 4). The Steering Group was reassured by the Strategic Review Recommendations Report that the Collaboration is doing well, that we're going in the right direction, and that we've maintained the principles of support and cooperation on which the Collaboration was founded. >

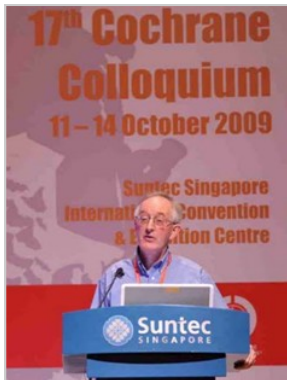
There are, however, things that can be done to ensure our ongoing success and to make improvements, and we are committed to that process.

The Steering Group's two meetings at this Colloquium, and many other meetings of its colleagues, were directed and liberated by the Report and the opportunities it has created for us. We have an exciting time ahead of us, in which everyone in the Collaboration has a part to play.

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## MEMBERSHIP ANNOUNCEMENTS

As announced in the previous issue of the Steering Group Bulletin, Jonathan Craig replaced Adrian Grant as Co-Chair of the Steering Group at this year's Colloquium in Singapore. The Group would like to thank Adrian for his tremendous commitment and contribution, both to the Group and to the Collaboration as a whole, during his several years on the Group, first as a member and then as Co-Chair.



Adrian at the AGM

Among Adrian's most notable achievements in the latter role, were his leadership of the process to appoint our first Editor in Chief, David Tovey, and revision of the eligibility criteria for the position of Co-Chair, approved by the Collaboration's members at this year's Annual General Meeting (Page 6).

As Adrian pointed out during his farewell remarks to the Steering Group in Singapore, he has seen huge change in the Collaboration and therefore in the Group's role. He commented that when he first joined the Group the Collaboration had almost no funding surplus. Now one of its major responsibilities is to decide how our core funding should best be spent to further the work and aims of the Collaboration. Adrian finished his remarks by expressing his excitement for the future of the Collaboration and his confidence in the Steering Group to lead the organisation over the coming years, particularly as it implements the recommendations from the Strategic Review.

The Steering Group welcomed a number of new members in Singapore. Sophie Hill, representing Co-ordinating Editors (Co-Eds), replaced Jonathan Craig, on his becoming Co-Chair. Sophie is Co-Ed of the Consumers and Communication Review Group. Mary Ellen Schaafsma, Executive Director of the Canadian Cochrane Network and Centre (CCNC), replaced Joy Oliver as one of the four Centre representatives; Joy had stepped down from the Group shortly before its previous meeting in Denmark in April this year. Mary Ellen's name will be familiar to many of you as one of the members of the Strategic Review team. >

Gail Higgins from the Cochrane Renal Group replaced Ruth Foxlee as Trials Search Co-ordinator representative. Mingming Zhang, based at the Chinese Cochrane Centre, replaced Janet Wale in representing the Cochrane Consumer Network (CCNet).

Ruth, Janet and Joy will remain closely involved in the work led by the Steering Group: Ruth, as a member of the team developing the *Cochrane Register of Studies* (Page 3), Joy as a member of the Monitoring and Registration Group, and Janet as Co-ordinator of CCNet, the structure and functions of which will form part of a strategic discussion on consumer involvement in the Collaboration next March in Auckland, New Zealand. The Steering Group would like to thank each of these outgoing members for their immense contributions to its work.

## UPCOMING CCSG MEETINGS



2010 mid-year: Auckland, New Zealand, 24-27 March

2010 Colloquium: Keystone, Colorado, USA, 18-22 October

An invitation from Livia Puljak, Director of the Croatian Branch of the Italian Cochrane Centre, to host the mid-year meetings in March/April 2011 in **Split, Croatia**, has been gratefully accepted by the Steering Group.

## 2012 COLLOQUIUM

The Steering Group, with support from the Colloquium Policy Advisory Group, approved the invitation from Youping Li, Director of the Chinese Cochrane Centre (CCC), to host the 2012 Colloquium in Nanning, China. Nanning is the capital of the Guangxi Autonomous Region in Southern China, near the border with Vietnam, and has airport connections to major travel hubs including Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong. It is known as 'the Green City' because of its abundance of tropical plant life. Our thanks to Youping and her team.



## CONSUMER INVOLVEMENT IN THE COLLABORATION



At its meeting in Singapore, Janet Wale reported back to the Steering Group on the results of the external review of the Cochrane Consumer Network (CCNet), supported by the Discretionary Fund. The findings were also discussed at various other meetings during the Colloquium.

The Steering Group's response was one of strong support for the role of CCNet in the Collaboration and of the role of consumers in the organisation more generally. As Jonathan Craig stated in his speech at the Colloquium's closing plenary, *"the Collaboration needs to be a consumer led organisation"*. In addition, when Norman Swan reported back from the WHO -Cochrane session, he also stated that a closer relationship between the two organisations should be *"consumer-led"*.

For these aims to be achieved, the Steering Group recognised that consumer involvement needs to be more firmly established at all levels of the Collaboration, the Collaboration needs to have stronger input in external consumer organisations, and it needs to address the ongoing issues surrounding consumer infrastructure in the Collaboration. As the step, the strategic session of the Steering Group, Centre Directors and Co-ordinating Editors' Executive in Auckland in March 2010 will focus on this issue. To inform the session, an advisory group including representatives of the key stakeholder groups will form the aims and desired outputs. The members of the Collaboration will be kept informed at all stages, and it may be possible for the proceedings to be viewed over the internet.

## THE OPPORTUNITIES FUND

As agreed at the Steering Group's meeting in Denmark in April 2009, there will be a fourth round of the Opportunities Fund, for which the Request for Proposals (RFP) will be released in late 2009 or early 2010. Applicants will be asked to address certain recommendations from the Collaboration's Strategic Review; full details will be provided in the RFP.

[CLICK HERE](#) to access the Bulletin on [cochrane.org](http://cochrane.org)

## THE COCHRANE REGISTER OF STUDIES



The Cochrane Collaboration is pleased to announce that, following a thorough assessment of some very good proposals, Metaxis Ltd ([www.metaxis.com](http://www.metaxis.com)) has been chosen as our development partner for the new Cochrane Register of Studies (CRS).

The CRS will contain the Collaboration's Specialised Registers (SRs) of healthcare studies and their reports, to be published in the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) in *The Cochrane Library* ([www.thecochranelibrary.com](http://www.thecochranelibrary.com)).

Metaxis specialises in the development of content management solutions and workflow control software. Although based in the UK, Metaxis is well aware of the international and dispersed nature of our organisation and its solution reflects this. The CRS will offer a new way of building and maintaining individual entity SRs and will become the mandatory mechanism for submitting SRs to CENTRAL.

Nick Royle, the Collaboration's CEO, will lead contract negotiations with Metaxis over the coming weeks. The development of the CRS will then commence under the direction of the CRS development team\*, with input from the Collaboration's members at all stages. An open 'question and answer' session was held at the recent Colloquium in Singapore, and further sessions will be scheduled for events such as the UK and Ireland Cochrane Contributors' Meeting in Cardiff, 2 and 3 March 2010, to include interactive internet sessions to enable wide participation.

**\*The CRS development team:** Lorne Becker, Jonathan Craig, Ruth Foxlee, Steve Greenaway (Oakleigh Consulting), Myles Gorton (Oakleigh Consulting), Gail Higgins, Lucie Jones (project management), Steve McDonald, Nick Royle and David Tovey.

## THE DISCRETIONARY FUND: REMINDER

The Discretionary Fund exists as an enabling device to allow Cochrane entities to seek limited funding for projects of benefit to the whole Collaboration. Applications can be made at any time and must meet some basic criteria ([Cochrane Policy Manual](#), section 1.5.3.). Funding is limited to 5,000 GBP per project, with an overall fund value of 15,000 GBP per annum.

## IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STRATEGIC REVIEW

Although the Strategic Review Recommendations Report was released in April 2009, the Singapore Colloquium's opening plenary was the first opportunity for most colleagues to engage with the Review's recommendations. Echoing the Steering Group's response, the overwhelming reaction in Singapore was a genuine welcome for what the Report had to say.



Since taking delivery of the Report, and accepting in principle all of the 26 recommendations, the Steering Group, working with key individuals in the various constituencies across the Collaboration, has been considering

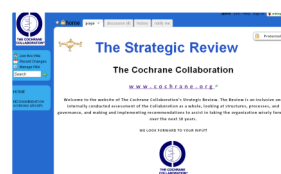
how the recommendations can be delivered. Elements of the Report have been categorised, grouped and prioritised, and working groups established (or existing working groups approached) to investigate the organisational, policy and financial implications of the recommendations for which they are responsible, and to develop strategies or pathways for their implementation across the Collaboration. These groups will report back to the Steering Group at its meeting in Auckland in 2010, laying out budget requests for their implementation proposals if required.

Particular focus is being placed on the top five recommendations, in order of importance to implement, prioritised by the Collaboration's members in a survey released earlier this year:

- Reaffirm our primary purpose to be the production of high quality systematic reviews
- Improve the usability of *The Cochrane Library* and other products for diverse stakeholders
- Formalise additional purposes including training, methods development and advocacy for evidence-based decision-making and identify responsibilities of entities for these purposes
- Develop a Marketing and Communications Strategy to promote external and internal awareness of the value arguments for and achievements of The Cochrane Collaboration
- Explore and pursue new funding opportunities

A more detailed account of the Steering Group's progress can be read in the forthcoming issue of *Cochrane News*, later this month. >

You can also keep up-to-date on the working groups on the [Strategic Review's wiki](#).



You can contribute on the wiki's discussion forum or contact the members directly. You may also request to join one of the groups if you are able to commit some time over the next few months. Please email Lucie Jones ([ljones@cochrane.org](mailto:ljones@cochrane.org)) at the Secretariat with your request.

### **"REVIEW THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE STEERING GROUP AND ITS ALIGNMENT WITH THE PURPOSES OF THE COLLABORATION"**

Rising to the Review's challenge of ensuring that the Collaboration's leadership structures remain fit for purpose is, understandably, a priority for the Group. In Singapore the Steering Group discussed some ideas for change that would entail its members taking on more functional portfolios for their Steering Group work, and agreed that, at its next meeting in Auckland, they would each be responsible for a specific portfolio of agenda items allocated according to their expertise and roles. These will be allocated around the following thematic areas: organisation and administration, finance and sustainability, Cochrane products, external partnerships, knowledge and infrastructure. As part of the same recommendation, a working group looking at different models of CCSG membership has been formed under the direction of Nick Royle, CEO, and Sally Green, Co-Director of the Australasian Cochrane Centre.

### **FUTURE PERFECT? THE STRATEGIC REVIEW FROM HERE**

Listen to Jonathan Craig's speech at the closing plenary in Singapore on [cochrane.org](http://cochrane.org).

Jonathan discussed implementing the Review's recommendations in the context of a 'ten-step work plan' for the Collaboration, designed to re-focus the efforts of the organisation's members, and its outputs, on its core mission: improving health care through evidence-based decision-making.



## BUDGET ALLOCATION IN THE COCHRANE COLLABORATION

NICK ROYLE, CEO

The Collaboration's Steering Group takes very seriously its collective responsibility as Trustees of the Charity, and as the Board of Directors of the Limited Company. It is always conscious that it has a limited budget to deploy, derived almost solely from royalties earned through subscriptions to *The Cochrane Library* – the collected work of the thousands of dedicated people who contribute to the Collaboration's work.

Reflecting that these resources derive from the work of everyone within the Collaboration, it is important that they are deployed to bring maximum benefit to as many entities and individuals as possible. This is why funds are principally deployed on our key infrastructure needs. These include the central organisational structure to ensure the Collaboration's effective and efficient running, including the Cochrane Editorial Unit and the Secretariat; key infrastructure projects such as the Information Management System (IMS), the *Cochrane Register of Studies* (Page 3), and our websites; and projects to deliver methodological and other improvements for the benefit of everyone within the Collaboration.

In allocating these resources, the Steering Group has to be conscious of the balance between supporting current needs and investing for the future. The recent Strategic Review has identified a number of key areas – advocacy, training, education, new products – that will require considerable investment. At its recent meeting in Singapore, the Steering Group approved a proposal to allocate a proportion of its resources annually to ensure that we remain innovative, and invest for the future. As the Collaboration's response to the Strategic Review develops, it will be important to know that we will have the capacity, albeit as ever constrained, to take effective action.

## OFFICIAL RELATIONS WITH THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (WHO): UPDATE



As we reported in the previous Steering Group Bulletin, the Collaboration will be submitting a bid to become a non-governmental organisation (NGO) in Official Relations (OR) with WHO within the next few months. As a recognised NGO, the Collaboration would be able to conduct formalised communication with WHO, and would have a seat on the World Health Assembly, which passes WHO health resolutions. Achieving OR with WHO would be a significant step in ensuring Cochrane reviews are used to develop global health policy, with particular relevance to low- and middle-income countries.

As part of the preparations for our bid, a special joint WHO-Cochrane linked session was held in Singapore before the Colloquium, chaired by Norman Swan, a prominent health broadcaster and journalist, and co-ordinated by Tikki Pang and Davina Ghersi from WHO, and Lisa Bero from the Collaboration. Norman reported back to the Steering Group that WHO recognises the importance of engaging with the Collaboration to improve the use of evidence in its healthcare policies. A common goal of maximising the synergies between the two organisations was identified at the session, achievable by focussing on high priority tasks especially in low- and middle-income countries and on making better use of what each organisation does well.

Norman reported that as a result of the session, prioritisation within the Collaboration had been made clearer to WHO: areas of activity, sustainable interaction, advocacy within the Collaboration and WHO, as well as externally. Co-ordination and enhancement of activities within the Collaboration were focussed on. There was agreement that there needs to be a timely and speedy responsiveness, a shared long-term commitment to progress the field of evidence-informed decisions, avoidance of duplication, and clear role definition at organisational and personal levels. Several high priority areas were agreed: capacity building for using and advocating research evidence; capacity building for production of reviews; co-production of reviews; communication within and between the two organisations; and methodology development.

A more detailed summary of the proceedings of this session can be found in the [Steering Group minutes](#) and in the webcast from the Colloquium plenary session chaired by Davina Ghersi and David Tovey, available on [cochrane.org](http://cochrane.org).

Read the latest news from across the Collaboration in [Cochrane News](#), including articles mentioned in this Bulletin. New issue out in late November.

# COCHRANE NEWS

News, information, resources & issues  
affecting The Cochrane Collaboration

## THE PRIORITISATION FUND

In 2007, the Steering Group created a one-off fund of 100,000 GBP to support projects that addressed mechanisms for, and issues surrounding, the prioritisation of reviews in the Collaboration. Five projects were funded and all have recently submitted final reports. To address the findings of these projects in context, a special session was run at the Colloquium, chaired by Lisa Bero and David Tovey, and included presentations by representatives of each of the projects. Read in more detail about the session and the conclusions drawn from it in the forthcoming issue of [Cochrane News](#).

## STEERING GROUP CHAIRS: REVISED ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND ELECTION ARRANGEMENTS

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) in Singapore, the Collaboration's members (representatives from each of its 92 registered entities) approved the Steering Group's proposal to widen the eligibility criteria for the position of Steering Group Co-Chair. Previously, only a current member of the Group could be elected to the post. Now, anyone who can demonstrate successful leadership within the Collaboration can be nominated for this position. Applicants must be nominated by three active members of the Collaboration, one of whom must be an existing member of the Steering Group, and selection of the successful candidate remains with the Steering Group. The purpose of widening eligibility is to optimise the quality of future candidates for key posts in the Collaboration and is in response to the 2006 review of the Steering Group.



Photographs from the Singapore Colloquium courtesy of Uncle Thien

[CLICK HERE](#) to access minutes from the Steering Group's meeting in Singapore on [cochrane.org](http://cochrane.org)

Next issue of the Steering Group Bulletin - April 2010

## AUTHOR SURVEY

In 2008, a Collaboration-wide survey of Cochrane authors was conducted by Donna Gillies, author representative on the Steering Group, to which nearly 2,000 authors responded. The purpose of the survey was to obtain a better understanding of the review process from the authors' perspective so that strategies to improve this process could be developed.

From the results of the survey, ten recommendations were produced:

- 1) The Cochrane Collaboration should consider ways of making the review process more time efficient for Cochrane authors.
- 2) The Cochrane Collaboration should work with members of Cochrane Review Groups to develop a more time efficient process for supporting authors.
- 3) Training, particularly in analysis and statistics, should be made more accessible to all authors and be offered in a more timely manner (e.g. online training modules).
- 4) Advice, particularly on analysis and statistics, should be made more accessible to authors.
- 5) Mentoring partnerships and/or discussion lists should be facilitated by The Cochrane Collaboration.
- 6) The Cochrane Collaboration should consider better ways of facilitating communication between Cochrane Review Groups and authors.
- 7) The Cochrane Collaboration should consider ways of supporting authors -whose first language is not English- in preparing Cochrane reviews.
- 8) Authors should be supported in searching and, if necessary, in obtaining papers and translation of papers.
- 9) The Cochrane Collaboration should work with members of Cochrane Review Groups to develop improved processes for the management of editorial and peer review feedback.
- 10) If authors are to be surveyed again, The Cochrane Collaboration should investigate ways of providing a more efficient survey link.

At its meeting in Singapore, the Steering Group accepted all ten recommendations on behalf of the Collaboration. It was agreed that implementation via Cochrane Review Groups (CRGs) is key, and the Editorial Unit will be holding discussions with every Review Group over the next year, informed by the results of this survey, the Strategic Review, the MRG report, and the CRG self-audit. Given that the recommendations also have implications for training, mentoring and networks for methodological support, the Training Working Group and Methods Groups' Convenors will also be addressing them and reporting back to the Steering Group at its next meeting in Auckland in 2010.