

Steering Group Bulletin

January 2008

No. 5

Introduction from the Co-Chairs

Lorne Becker and Adrian Grant

Welcome to this fifth issue of the Steering Group Bulletin, in which we try to keep Cochrane entities and supporters abreast of the issues currently under discussion in the Steering Group, and of decisions made regarding these. In this issue we include reports on progress with CENTRAL, improvements to our review production processes and tools, and the extension of our publishing contract. We report back on implementing the 2006 review of the Steering Group, and preview the review of the Collaboration that Jeremy Grimshaw will be leading over the next year. At our next meeting, in Vellore, India, in April, major discussions will include where we go in future with our published product – do we, in Sir Muir Gray's apposite phrase, "stick to the knitting" and concentrate on systematic reviews, or should we look further and consider Cochrane content in Point of Care applications, Continuing Medical Education applications, or others? The proposed editorial board and the possibility of an editor-in-chief will also be discussed, building on the work and consultation undertaken by the Co-ordinating Editors. In all of these important matters it is vital that your representatives on the Steering Group hear your views, and we do urge you to contact them to ensure that your voice is heard. ♦

WHERE WE ARE IN THE ELECTION PROCESS

Claire Allen

The following people were elected this year (see election process at www.cochrane.org/ccsg.htm):

Zbys Fedorowicz (representing CRGs - 'at large' position)

The following candidates were elected unopposed:

Lisa Bero (representing Centres) – second term

Rob Scholten (representing Centres) – second term

Liz Whamond (representing the Consumer Network)

Katrina Williams (representing Fields)

STEERING GROUP MEETINGS

The Steering Group meets face-to-face twice a year, once during the annual Colloquium, for one and a half days, and a second time for three days, about six months later. The Steering Group's Publishing Policy and Executive Groups meet monthly by teleconference. The face-to-face meetings are intensive and require considerable preparation by participants. Forthcoming dates are as follows:

2008 mid-year: Vellore, India, 11–13 April 2008

2008 Colloquium: Freiburg, Germany, 2 + 6 October 2008

2009 mid-year: Copenhagen, Denmark, 24–26 April 2009

2009 Colloquium: Singapore, 11–14 October 2009

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

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STEERING GROUP NEWS IN BRIEF

Claire Allen

Current Steering Group members

Steering Group members, and the end dates of their terms of office, are as follows:

Co-Chairs:

Lorne Becker: 2008

Adrian Grant: 2009

Representing Cochrane Review Groups:

Jonathan Craig (Co-ordinating Editors): 2009

Zbys Fedorowicz (All CRG members): 2010

Donna Gillies (Authors): 2008

Peter Tugwell (Co-ordinating Editors): 2008

Narelle Willis (RGCs): 2008

Hans van der Wouden (All CRG members): 2008

Representing Trials Search Co-ordinators:

Ruth Foxlee: 2009

Representing Centres:

Lisa Bero: 2010

Sally Green: 2008

Joy Oliver (non-Director representative): 2009

Rob Scholten: 2010

Representing Fields:

Katrina Williams: 2010

Representing Methods Groups:

Jon Deeks: 2008

Representing Consumers:

Janet Wale: 2009

Liz Whamond: 2010

Please let your representative know your views. Their contact details are on the website:

www.cochrane.org/contact/entities.htm#CCSG

GOAL 1: To ensure high quality Cochrane systematic reviews are available across a broad range of healthcare topics

CENTRAL interim measures and moving forward

Ruth Foxlee

The TSC Working Group (TSCWG), formed in May 2007, has made progress in the implementation of the CENTRAL Interim Measures. A new, plain English register submission guidance document has been written and was piloted at workshops in São Paulo and Oxford. There have been two largely successful register submissions and the TSCWG continues to liaise with Wiley to identify and resolve any errors. The new TSC User Guide, which was circulated in December 2007, will hopefully contribute to a further minimisation of errors. In light of these positive developments the Steering Group is eager to move forward on the development of a successor to CENTRAL. A proposal to develop an RFP (Request for Proposals) document was discussed and accepted in São Paulo. The RFP will be based on recommendations from the CENTRAL Vision Group and CENTRAL Interim Measures reports. These reports do not provide all the detail required for an RFP so the TSCWG, in collaboration with the Steering Group, will develop a more comprehensive framework. Consultation with all stakeholders will take place as the RFP takes shape, and all TSCs are encouraged to contribute ideas on how the CENTRAL redevelopment could work best for CRGs, authors and end-users alike. The TSCs' desire to contribute on this and many other issues via an executive group was encouraged by the Steering Group. An exploration of the possible structure and function of such a group is currently being undertaken by the TSCWG. ♦

Cochrane communication channels

There are a number of targeted communication channels, including [e-mail lists](#), [newsletters and bulletins](#), [RSS feeds](#).

Further details can be found on the Collaboration website, at www.cochrane.org ♦

Access to Steering Group papers

Nick Royle

Papers considered by the Steering Group are given a default classification of Open Access, and can be read by anybody. For various reasons, others have more restricted access conditions, as follows:

Embargoed until [date, or 'after CCSG consideration'] where a paper is time-sensitive for some reason, such as being the subject of a press announcement.

Restricted – where the paper is restricted in readership to Steering Group members, but no specific security measures are required.

Commercial-in-confidence – where a paper pertains to contractual details that might be of benefit to competing commercial interests, and where the paper needs to be sensitively handled, as for confidential papers.

Confidential – where the contents of a paper are considered to be sensitive for personal, legal or other organisational reasons, and where the paper should be managed sensitively (such as being stored in a locked cabinet) until such time as the access restriction is lifted.

Access conditions are noted on the Steering Group agenda. To obtain an open access paper, contact your Steering Group representative (see previous page for link to contact details). ◆

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GOAL 1 continued...

Collaboration to appoint Project Support and Business Communications Officer

Nick Royle

Alessandro Liberati's 2006 review of the Steering Group made a range of important recommendations. A number of these revolved around the Collaboration's need to manage and co-ordinate the multiple projects running within the Collaboration at any one time, and to improve internal communication about these projects and related activities. Further recommendations concerned the need to manage the Collaboration's activities through identifying and monitoring key business indicators.

After looking carefully at these recommendations, and considering competing priorities and the Collaboration's financial health in some detail, the decision was taken to create a new post of Project Support and Business Communications Officer. Reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, this new person will help fill the gaps identified above, help us to manage and co-ordinate these effectively, and ensure that good information flows about core business processes are maintained, allowing management decisions and strategic developments to be evidence based.

Details of the new post are available on the Cochrane website, in the 'Opportunities' section (www.cochrane.org/jobs). ◆

Collaboration to implement editorial workflow and tracking system

Responding to a request from the Information Management System Group (IMSG, the oversight committee for Cochrane IMS developments), the Steering Group considered whether the Collaboration should adopt a uniform editorial workflow and tracking system to be used by all Review Groups.

Continued on page 4...

GOAL 1 continued...

Continued from page 4 ...

Taking into account general developments in the medical publishing world, where leading journals now mandate the use of such systems, and the Collaboration's need to understand and monitor its editorial processes for quality improvement purposes, the decision was taken to develop and implement as a matter of urgency a single software system for uniform use by all Review Groups which, in due course, would become mandatory.

Further details of the development and implementation plan, including consultation and piloting, will be disseminated during 2008. ♦

Towards the next generation of Cochrane reviews

Monica Kjeldstrøm

Monica Kjeldstrøm, IMS Director, outlined the plans for rolling out RevMan 5 to all Review Groups and their authors in March 2008. RevMan 5 is the first mandatory release of the software for more than seven years.

RevMan 5 will be more user-friendly, improve version control and allow authors to share their reviews more easily with their review team and editors. It is designed to improve the quality of Cochrane reviews by reflecting advances in the methodology to help to make the review process more transparent and review findings more accessible. The software for the first time supports the preparation of Diagnostic Test Accuracy reviews and Overviews of reviews, review types that will also be published in *The Cochrane Library* during 2008.

During a period of nine months (from March to November 2008), active Cochrane authors will be expected to switch to the new software as they start to work on new reviews or update existing ones. All existing reviews that are not being updated during this period will still need to be converted from the RevMan 4 format to RevMan 5.

Continued...

In principle the conversion can happen automatically, but the conversion process represents an opportunity to help correct minor but important errors and improve the formatting of existing reviews. The Steering Group therefore agreed to allocate a maximum of 60,000 GBP from core funds to support editorial bases of Review Groups to undertake review conversion and minor improvements. Review Groups can also opt to have their reviews converted centrally but without the possibility of correcting and improving the reviews at the same time. The Editorial bases will be contacted with more information in the next few weeks. ♦

RevMan 5 training strategies

Donna Gillies

The rollout of RevMan 5 is an exciting time for The Cochrane Collaboration. As well as a new user-friendly interface, RevMan 5 offers options such as the ability to include new types of reviews (methodology, diagnostic, and overviews); new tables (risk of bias, summary of findings, studies awaiting assessment); new statistical methods and new options for the display of data. However, the Steering Group at its mid-year meeting in 2007 recognised the need to determine the availability of RevMan 5 training resources and strategies. Since then, a working group has been contacting key people within the Collaboration to identify existing resources and those that need to be made available.

Through these consultations, we have identified a great deal of excellent work already being done on RevMan 5 training. This of course includes the new Handbook 5 due for release in 2009. However, gaps have been identified, and this includes a need to facilitate the availability of training, with new methodologies in particular. Communication about training across the Collaboration appeared to be another major concern. The communication issues should be greatly improved through the incoming Project Support and Business Communications Officer, and the Steering Group will continue to work on developing strategies to address the remaining gaps. ♦

GOAL 2: To promote access to Cochrane reviews and the other products of The Cochrane Collaboration

Invitation to join Guidelines International Network (G-I-N)

Lorne Becker

One of the recommendations of the 2006 review of the Steering Group was that “The Steering Group should be more proactive in establishing collaborative relationship(s) with external organisations....” In response, we have begun discussions with the Guidelines International Network (G-I-N) about potential collaborations. G-I-N is an international not-for-profit association of organisations and individuals involved in the development and use of clinical practice guidelines. Since its foundation in 2002, G-I-N has grown to include over 70 organisational members and partners representing 36 countries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania. A number of international organisations such as the WHO are also members.

I attended the 4th G-I-N Conference in August 2007, and it was clear at the meeting that Cochrane reviews are held in high regard by G-I-N members and that our collaboration with the organization would be welcomed. Sally Green, Jeremy Grimshaw and I met with the chair, the vice-chair and the principal officer of the organization to discuss ways that our organizations could work together more closely. As a first step, The Cochrane Collaboration has been asked to designate an individual to join the G-I-N advisory board, and I have agreed to accept this position.

A number of Cochrane Centre Directors, Co-ordinating Editors, and others are already active in G-I-N, but this is the first time that we have established links at an organizational level. ♦

Extension to publishing contract signed

Nick Royle

Following extensive negotiation, and as heralded by information to entities and presentation at the Annual General Meeting in São Paulo, an extension has been signed with Wiley Blackwell giving continuity to our publishing arrangements up to the end of the year 2013.

Naturally delighted, Sue Corbett, Wiley-Blackwell's Managing Director Medicine, said “The Cochrane Library is a comprehensive resource at the cutting edge of evidence-based medicine, which helps practitioners and patients worldwide to understand treatment options. We are proud to publish The Cochrane Library and look forward to working with The Cochrane Collaboration to expand further the reach of the Library worldwide.”

As well as maintaining continuity, what this will mean for the Collaboration is an increased share of revenue generated from sales of licences, improving on the excellent terms agreed for the original contract, and, most to be celebrated, free one-click access to the *Library* for anyone living in the world's most economically deprived countries (those listed by the WHO's HINARI agreement as 'Band 1'). Half the world's population will now have free one-click access to *The Cochrane Library*.

For authors, perhaps Wiley-Blackwell's most important achievement has been the listing of the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* in the ISI Science Citation Index 'General Medicine' category. Watch this space for the impact factor, due to be announced in June 2008! ♦

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GOAL 3: To ensure an efficient, transparent organisational structure and management system for The Cochrane Collaboration

The next three Cochrane Colloquia

Jini Hetherington

Our Colloquia are so important in terms of learning something new, making fresh contacts and greeting old friends, and re-enthusing us for the year ahead. Those who were able to attend the 15th Cochrane Colloquium in São Paulo, Brazil, will have a store of memories of yet another fruitful and enjoyable event, whose highlight must surely be the Brazilian carnival-style party.

We can start looking forward already to visiting the beautiful city of Freiburg in October 2008, when the German Cochrane Centre will be hosting their Colloquium from 3 to 7 October. The following year we will be in Singapore, from 11 to 14 October 2009. After choosing the first week of October for this, it was discovered that the event was likely to clash with the Formula One Grand Prix. (You may remember that this international sporting event caused the change of dates for the São Paulo Colloquium.) Efforts to identify other dates were constrained by the APEC Forum being hosted in Singapore in November 2009. It was regrettable but unavoidable to schedule the Colloquium during Canadian Thanksgiving; hopefully, we will not lose too many Canadian participants because of this. However, for those who miss them, most plenary sessions and perhaps many workshops will be available online through podcasts and slidecasts.

In 2010, our Colloquium will be hosted for the second time in the States, in Keystone, Colorado (from 18-22 October). People considering attending this Colloquium should try to stay overnight in Denver beforehand, to get acclimatised to the high altitude in Keystone. ♦

Report from the Monitoring and Registration Group (MRG)

Rob Scholten

The MRG reported back to the Steering Group in São Paulo, specifically in relation to the 2007 monitoring of Cochrane Review Groups (CRGs). We highlighted a summary of the replies to some indicators of how CRGs communicate with authors. The CRGs were asked whether or not they had (internal) guidelines for timely responding to authors. Sixty-six percent did have such guidelines. A summary was made of the (self-reported) response times to general enquiries, title registration, and feedback to protocols and reviews. The results will be fed back to CRGs.

In 2008, the MRG will develop standard operating procedures for various changes that may occur within Cochrane entities. Some changes, for example moving the editorial base to another location, may have a number of consequences for CRG staff, and a standard operating procedure might help to manage such events.

We also reported news about the Sexually Transmitted Diseases Group. In São Paulo, Heather Maxwell and I met with Mauro Ramos (proposed Co-ordinating Editor) and Fernanda Torres de Carvalho (proposed Review Group Co-ordinator), Alvaro Atallah, Director of the Brazilian Cochrane Centre, and Nandi Siegfried and Joy Oliver of the South African Cochrane Centre, who also represented the HIV/AIDS CRG (currently mentoring STD CRG). Mauro has much support from various organisations around the world and he is in the process of finalising a strong action plan. He will also join a meeting of all Co-ordinating Editors in London, England, in January 2008. We do hope that the STD CRG can be established in Porto Alegre in Brazil soon. The STD CRG would then be the first CRG to have its main editorial base in a developing country. ♦

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GOAL 3 Continued...

Five-year review of the Steering Group

Adrian Grant

At its meeting in São Paulo, the Steering Group finalised its responses to the 2006 Steering Group Review. The 17 recommendations made by the Review Group, which was led by Alessandro Liberati, addressed five broad areas:

Strategic focus – The Steering Group has taken important steps to ensure that it focuses on longer-term strategic issues: changed working arrangements; linking planning to budgets and priorities; and taking initiatives (such as the proposed editorial board) to assure review quality.

Communication – Efforts to improve internal communication include the production of this newsletter, and ways to improve collaborative arrangements with external organisations are being further developed.

Resource allocation – Mechanisms for the use and allocation of funds have been improved; the Collaboration's Secretariat is being strengthened, principally through a new Project Support and Business Communications Officer post; and the issue of long-term sustainability of the Collaboration is being addressed through a scoping exercise on how to raise funds, with a view to employing a fund-raising specialist.

Review and monitoring – Criteria for easier monitoring of the Collaboration's progress are under development; and a Collaboration-wide review will be undertaken in 2008 led by Jeremy Grimshaw, director of the Canadian Cochrane Centre.

Implementation – The Steering Group's responses to the recommendations of the 2006 review were outlined at the Annual General Meeting in São Paulo: The full response will be circulated widely once it is finalised early in 2008; and progress in implementation will be monitored regularly at future Steering Group meetings.



Collaboration Review 2008

Nick Royle

All good organisations periodically review who they are, what they do, how they do it, and the structures and processes through which they maintain and achieve their goals. The Collaboration is no different. We know that we are part of a fantastic movement that is doing wonderful things, but at the same time we know that we can't rest on our laurels, and need to keep looking forward.

During 2008, Jeremy Grimshaw will be leading a review of the Collaboration's structures, organisational and business processes and governance arrangements, to ensure that we have an organisation fit for purpose for the next ten years and beyond.

Jeremy will be undertaking an extensive process of consultation within and around the Collaboration, taking the views of and evidence from internal and external stakeholders. This will include both face-to-face meetings and 'virtual conversations', giving the maximum number of people the chance to contribute.

It is hoped that the results of this process can be shared with you during the Collaboration's 2008 Colloquium in Freiburg, Germany. This may be too early to make any firm decisions on the future – your feedback on recommendations will be vital before any such firm decisions are made. ◆

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The Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group (CCSG) from 24 October 2007



JANET WALE
Consumer Network
Representative
(Australia)



LIZ WHAMOND
Consumer Network
Representative
(Canada)



LORNE BECKER
Co-Chair &
Convener of the
Publishing Policy Group
(United States)



ADRIAN GRANT
Co-Chair &
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Executive Group
(United Kingdom)



DONNA GILLIES
Author Representative
(Australia)



ROB SCHOLTEN
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Group
(The Netherlands)



SALLY GREEN
Centre Representative
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LISA BERO
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(United States)



JOY OLIVER
Centre Representative
(South Africa)



JON DEEKS
Methods Group Representative
(United Kingdom)



KATRINA WILLIAMS
Field Representative
(Australia)

Members of the CCSG
Co-Chairs: Lorne Becker and Adrian Grant
CRG Representatives: Jonathan Craig, Zbys Fedorowicz, Donna Gillies,
Peter Tugwell, Narelle Willis, and Hans van der Wouden
TSC Representative: Ruth Foxlee
Centre Representatives: Lisa Bero, Sally Green, Joy Oliver, and Rob Scholten
Field/Network Representative: Katrina Williams
Methods Group Representative: Jon Deeks
Consumer Network Representatives: Janet Wale and Liz Whamond



THE COCHRANE
COLLABORATION®

COCHRANE COLLABORATION SECRETARIAT
Co-Chairs: Lorne Becker and Adrian Grant
Treasurer: Donna Gillies
Chief Executive Officer: Nick Royle
Administrator and Company Secretary: Jini Hetherington
Deputy Administrator: Claire Allen
Administrative Assistant/Secretary: Diana Wyatt



JINI HETHERINGTON
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