

# Steering Group Bulletin

NOVEMBER 2008

No. 7

## YOUR STEERING GROUP (CCSG):

**LORNE BECKER** and **ADRIAN GRANT** (Co-Chairs); **DONNA GILLIES** (Author Representative); **LISA BERO**, **STEVE McDONALD**, **JOY OLIVER** and **ROB SCHOLTEN** (Centre Representatives); **JONATHAN CRAIG** and **ROGER SOLL** (Co-Ed Representatives); **JANET WALE** and **LIZ WHAMOND** (Consumer Network Representatives); **ZBYS FEDOROWICZ** and **HANS VAN DER WOUDE** (CRG Representatives); **KATRINA WILLIAMS** (Field Representative); **JULIAN HIGGINS** (Methods Group Representative); **RUTH FOXLEE** (TSC Representative); **SONJA HENDERSON** (RGC Representative)

## INTRODUCTION FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

LORNE BECKER and ADRIAN GRANT

Welcome home from the Colloquium in Freiburg and to this, the 7th edition of The Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group Bulletin. The Bulletin is designed to inform the Collaboration at large of the decisions taken by the Steering Group, that have a real and wide effect on the strategic direction taken by the organization, as well as the day-to-day workings of its entities and groups.

We were delighted to see so many of you at the recent Colloquium, and would like to extend our thanks to Gerd Antes, Bärbel Schätzle, Britta Lang, Juliane Ried and the rest of the team at the German Cochrane Centre and beyond, who made this year's event such a success. The Cochrane Collaboration is a global and dispersed organization, so any opportunity for members to come together is always special. This year proved to be especially productive and this issue of the Bulletin will focus in particular on the most notable outcomes of the Steering Group's time in Freiburg.

As always, your feedback on the decisions taken by the Steering Group is very welcome and we encourage you to contact your entity representative with your ideas.

## INCOMING AND OUTGOING MEMBERS

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to **Jon Deeks**, **Sally Green**, **Peter Tugwell** and **Narelle Willis**, who left their positions on the Group at this year's Colloquium in Freiburg. Their contributions to the Steering Group have been immense and will continue to impact widely on the policies and practices of the Collaboration as a whole.

Sincere thanks also to **Monica Kjeldstrøm**, who stepped down as a Director for the Trading Company at this year's AGM after nine years in this role.

The Steering Group welcomes **Sonja Henderson**, **Julian Higgins**, **Steve McDonald** and **Roger Soll**, who joined the Group in Freiburg: congratulations to them on their election.

Congratulations also to **Hans van der Wouden** and **Donna Gillies**, who were re-elected for a second term.

## UPCOMING CCSG MEETINGS



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

2009 Colloquium: Singapore, 11–14 October

2010 mid-year: Auckland, New Zealand, late March

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

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## APPOINTMENT OF THE COLLABORATION'S FIRST EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

We are extremely pleased to announce the appointment of David Tovey as The Cochrane Collaboration's first Editor-in-Chief of *The Cochrane Library*.

David joins the Collaboration from his current role as Editorial Director of the BMJ (British Medical Journal) Group's 'Knowledge' division, responsible for *BMJ Clinical Evidence* and its sister product *BestTreatments*.

Looking forward to his new role, David said *"The Cochrane Collaboration has been enormously influential in changing healthcare practice through systematically reviewing the evidence for treatment interventions. The Cochrane Library is a key resource in bringing this evidence to the attention of practitioners, policy-makers and patients. I look forward to working with the Collaboration's many supporters to ensure that the Library remains relevant to its users, that its quality and coverage continue to grow, and that it remains at the core of healthcare decision-making."*

David graduated from Bristol University (UK) in 1983. After completing vocational GP (General Practitioner) training, he was senior partner in a large, inner city practice in South London, and a postgraduate tutor until 2003, when he joined the BMJ Group.

Adrian Grant explains that *"This is a key appointment for the Collaboration. We were extremely fortunate to have an exceptionally strong group of candidates for the post and I am confident that David Tovey is the right person for this role and for the Collaboration"*.

David's appointment has already generated much interest within the Collaboration and beyond. He will take up the post early in 2009 and is expected to remain based in the UK.



DR DAVID TOVEY

[www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org)

## STILL TIME TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE STRATEGIC REVIEW!



Jeremy Grimshaw and his team made a colourful splash at this year's Colloquium in their lime green t-shirts emblazoned with the request to "Ask me about the Strategic Review!" The t-shirts, along with the Review's booth at the main venue (the Konzerthaus), and Jeremy's presentations at the major meetings of the week, were designed to engage as many people as possible in the review process: to feed back, challenge and re-evaluate what has already been learned, and to begin to crystallize the results into a final product. This will first be presented to the Steering Group in the form of a written report in early 2009.

The Review is intended to assess how the Collaboration works and whether this aligns with opinion on how it *should* work now, and in the future, to ensure the organization's continued relevance. This opinion is being formed through a series of dialogues with internal and external stakeholders and requires **your input** to ensure it accurately reflects the diversity and breadth of contributors to the Collaboration.

Read about and contribute to the Review via its website:

[www.cochrane.org/ccsg/  
review](http://www.cochrane.org/ccsg/review)



THE REVIEW BOOTH AT FREIBURG

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

Lisa Bero (Centre Representative) is leading the Collaboration's application to become a Non-Governmental Organization in Official Relations with WHO, creating a mechanism for formalized communication between the two organizations including a seat for the Collaboration in the World Health Assembly, which passes WHO health resolutions.

Lisa travels to Geneva in mid-November 2008 to finalize our bid.



## FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES



[http://www.cochrane.org/admin/  
cc\\_funding\\_initiatives.htm](http://www.cochrane.org/admin/cc_funding_initiatives.htm)

### THE OPPORTUNITIES FUND

We are happy to announce a third round of the Opportunities Fund in 2009. We are currently finalizing specific requirements for proposals and will release guidelines and a deadline for applications shortly, but should you be thinking of submitting a proposal and have any questions, please contact Lucie Jones at the Secretariat ([ljones@cochrane.org](mailto:ljones@cochrane.org)).

As its guiding principle, the Fund looks for proposals that address the Collaboration's Strategic Plan: <http://www.cochrane.org/admin/stratplan.htm> and collaborative projects will be particularly welcomed. Total funds of GBP 100,000 will be available, although there is no specific maximum per project.

[http://www.cochrane.org/admin/cc\\_funding\\_initiatives.htm#oppfund](http://www.cochrane.org/admin/cc_funding_initiatives.htm#oppfund)

### THE DISCRETIONARY FUND

Applications to the Discretionary Fund are invited all year round, up to a maximum of GBP 3,000 per project and a maximum of GBP 15,000 overall. The Fund is designed to facilitate important activity within the Collaboration and applications will only be accepted from the person or people responsible for a particular registered entity, and convenors of the Steering Group's advisory groups.

A brief application for funding should be sent to Jini Hetherington at the Secretariat ([jhetherington@cochrane.org](mailto:jhetherington@cochrane.org)) addressing the criteria listed on the website.

[http://www.cochrane.org/admin/cc\\_funding\\_initiatives.htm#discfund](http://www.cochrane.org/admin/cc_funding_initiatives.htm#discfund)

## COCHRANE COMMUNICATION

[www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org)

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## 2010 MID-YEAR MEETING

We are excited to have been invited to Auckland, New Zealand, for our mid-year meeting in late March 2010. New Zealand has over 300 Cochrane authors working across many groups, and the New Zealand branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre is a relatively small but active entity within the Collaboration. Many thanks to Cindy Farquhar, Mark Jeffrey and their team for the invitation to Auckland.

## ISSUES OF SUSTAINABILITY



### ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

As the Co-Chairs highlighted in their introduction, The Cochrane Collaboration is a truly international organization, reflected in the composition of the Steering Group whose members cover six time zones—making organizing teleconferences a bit of a headache!

We meet face-to-face twice a year, once during the annual Colloquium, for two days, and a second time for three days, about six months later. The **Publishing Policy** and **Executive** sub-groups of the Steering Group meet monthly by teleconference, and the **Monitoring and Registration Group** meets face-to-face twice a year.

As a standing item on our agendas we discuss the environmental impact of our meetings and the decisions made during them. There are certain questions we often revisit: "Are face-to-face meetings necessary? Does international travel make the Group's carbon footprint too high?" The answer to both questions is probably "Yes"; but we feel the productivity and inclusivity of a face-to-face meeting when compared to a teleconference make the travel to attend meetings necessary and acceptable to the running of our international organization. As web and teleconferencing technology advance we may re-evaluate our decision, and we are always trying out the latest gadgets and web services in the hope of finding the perfect solution!

### SOCIO-CULTURAL SUSTAINABILITY

While the Steering Group is certainly international, there is some argument as to whether it can be considered truly diverse—and therefore whether it really does reflect the members of the organization it serves.

Donna Gillies (Author Representative) will be coordinating a report about representation on the Steering Group for consideration at our next meeting in Copenhagen. Views on this issue should be sent to [donna\\_gillies@wsahs.nsw.gov.au](mailto:donna_gillies@wsahs.nsw.gov.au).

## FINANCIAL REPORT FROM THE CEO

NICK ROYLE

***“Public believes 40% of charity income goes on admin costs”***

So reported the magazine ‘Third Sector’ on 23rd October, in an article based on a report by the not-for-profit consultancy ‘nfpSynergy’ ([www.nfpsynergy.net](http://www.nfpsynergy.net)), noting that the actual administration cost to charities in the UK is 12% of their income, against a level of 11% that the public thinks is acceptable. The article stated that “People hugely overestimate how much charities spend on fundraising and administration”.

To put these figures into perspective, the comparative figures for the Collaboration show that, from a gross reported annual income for all entities of over £12 million, we spend less than 3.5% on the Charity’s administration costs. This is well below the sector average, and reflects the care taken to ensure that only the minimum required administrative team is maintained.

As ever, financing the Collaboration’s various activities remains a tight balancing act. There is always more that could be done to improve our outputs and increase the level and quality of our various activities, from creating and improving the methods for producing systematic reviews, through to communicating their results. But spending more in one area means having fewer funds available for other projects. Specific pressures on the Collaboration’s resources currently include the need to fund the functions of the incoming Editor-in-Chief adequately; a significant increase to our investment in the various software packages we need; and improving the quality of our reviews, including the need to invest in training and support to entity staff, authors and others.

## SHORT PRINT VERSIONS OF COCHRANE REVIEWS

For Cochrane reviews produced using RevMan5, a short print version has been made available from Issue 4, 2008 of *The Cochrane Library*. This version includes the abstract and plain language summary and is in addition to the new ‘standard’ PDF (comprising everything except the appendices and analysis graphs), and the full review. The short print version is intended to make reviews more accessible, particularly to consumers. Our thanks to Deborah Pentesco-Gilbert at John Wiley & Sons for her hard work in making these available.

## THE COLLABORATION’S INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS)

***Maintaining and developing our Information Management System into the future***

The Collaboration’s Information Management System (IMS), the suite of software products developed by the Nordic Cochrane Centre, remains at the core of our capability to prepare, maintain and update Cochrane Systematic Reviews. A recent consultancy report has highlighted the excellent quality of this software, noting that the Collaboration has developed a solution, aided by the special way that we do things, that represents the ambition of many publishing organizations.

In looking at how to maintain the best of what we have into the future, the consultant outlined a series of options, and recommended that the Collaboration make some adjustments to its current approach, building on the achievements of the past, and consolidating for the future, with greater use of open source and third-party material, as existing functionalities need to be replaced, and new ones developed.

The Steering Group had a thorough discussion of the report, and discussions are now taking place with stakeholders in the IMS to build a consensus for the future.

## ASSOCIATION WITH THE CAMPBELL COLLABORATION



We were pleased to welcome Eamonn Noonan, CEO of The Campbell Collaboration, to our meeting in Freiburg. As part of our close relationship with Campbell, a Cochrane Steering Group member represents us at their Steering Group meetings.

The Campbell Collaboration carries out systematic reviews in the fields of education, crime and justice, and social welfare.

[www.campbellcollaboration.org](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org)

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## CENTRALIZED UPDATING OFFICER PILOT PROJECT

Rob Scholten (Centre Representative) reported back to the Steering Group in Freiburg on the results of a Collaboration-funded project designed to assess the feasibility and success of a centrally employed Updating Officer (UO) who would work collaboratively with Cochrane Review Groups and authors to update selected reviews. The project found that 58% of Cochrane reviews were older than two years and clarified that authors should be closely involved in the updating of their reviews, and that there should be a better prioritization process for updating them (an issue being addressed by an Opportunities Fund supported project).

The report concluded that a centralized UO could be a good use of core funds to support entities in due course, although any decision to implement the recommendation will be taken in collaboration with the Editor-in-Chief.

## A LITTLE ABOUT OUR PUBLISHING ARRANGEMENTS WITH JOHN WILEY & SONS

Our publishing relationship with John Wiley & Sons isn't just about *The Cochrane Library*. We also work together on derivative products (works derived from or containing Cochrane Systematic Reviews, and for which Wiley has the right of 'first refusal'), and on a Cochrane book series, again derived from the knowledge gained working on Cochrane reviews.

If you have an idea for a 'derivative' product or for a book, get in touch with either Deborah Pentesco-Gilbert ([dpentesc@wiley.com](mailto:dpentesc@wiley.com)), 'Publisher' for the *Library*, or Mary Banks ([mary.banks@wiley.com](mailto:mary.banks@wiley.com)), Senior Publisher at BMJ Books (a John Wiley & Sons brand), or have an informal chat with Nick Royle, our CEO ([nroyle@cochrane.org](mailto:nroyle@cochrane.org)).

An example of a recent derivative product is the journal *Evidence-based Child Health, A Cochrane Review Journal*, edited by Martin Offringa and Terry Klassen.

Just published in the book series are the first print version of the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* (ISBN 978-0-470-69951-5), edited by Julian Higgins and Sally Green, which flew off the shelves at the Freiburg Colloquium, and *Pregnancy and Childbirth: A Cochrane Pocketbook* (ISBN 978-0-470-51845-8), edited by Justus Hofmeyr et. al.

## MANAGING CONFLICTS OF INTEREST WITHIN THE STEERING GROUP

Decisions about how best to use the resources available to the Collaboration have become increasingly important as its core income has risen in recent years. In considering the options for expenditure it has not been uncommon for members of the Steering Group to have potential conflicts of interest. These may be **direct** interests in the outcome: they may be formally associated with a bid, or funds requested within a bid are destined to go to their parent institution. Additionally, there may be **indirect** interests: awarding funds to one option may indirectly affect the likelihood of resources being committed to an alternative use, given that resources are finite.

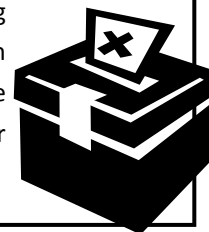
Since 2005 Steering Group members have been required to make declarations of interest in a structured and standardized way (*The Cochrane Manual, Section 1.5.2.*) but it was felt that further clarification was required on how to deal with potential conflicts when they arise. Following discussions at our meeting in Freiburg, we have decided that:

Members should declare interest in agenda items at the start of meetings and also before each item so that a decision can be taken by the Group as to whether this interest makes the individual conflicted—after all, being interested (in both senses of the word) in Collaboration issues is a positive characteristic for a Steering Group member!

Declarations are to be broadened beyond commercial funding to include any funding received from the Collaboration, directly or indirectly.

For agenda items for which members are considered conflicted they will be asked to leave the meeting room, unless their input is needed to reach a decision (although that member(s) won't be involved in making that decision). Further discussions on the criteria used to decide what makes a member so conflicted that they cannot participate in particular decisions will take place at the next meeting in Copenhagen in April 2009.

CCSG candidates will in future be required to add an additional section to their election statement declaring potential conflicts of interest so that voters can decide for themselves whether the candidate would be limited in their ability to represent their constituency fully.



## REVISED CRITERIA FOR SELECTING CO-CHAIRS OF THE STEERING GROUP

In recent years the Group has appointed two Co-Chairs to share the considerable and increasing workload associated with the position, which was originally covered by a single Chair. Central to the role of Co-Chair is leadership: of the Steering Group and its sub-groups, and more widely within the Collaboration, at the Colloquia and as representatives of the organization to external bodies.

Currently only Steering Group members are eligible for election as Co-Chair but there was a feeling among the Group that broadening eligibility and accessing a wider pool of potential candidates would be beneficial in attracting people particularly well-suited to the role.

The decision was taken to allow any person who already holds, or has held, a leadership role within the Collaboration to apply for the position of Co-Chair. The exact definition of a 'leadership role' will be determined at our next meeting and will be communicated to the Collaboration before the next Co-Chair election.

## PROPOSAL APPROVED TO ESTABLISH A NURSING CARE NETWORK

The proposal to establish a Cochrane Nursing Care Network has been extensively discussed by the Steering Group due to strong, Collaboration-wide opinion on either side of the debate as to whether a Network dedicated to nursing is the best way of facilitating the engagement of those involved in nursing care in the work of the Collaboration.

While sensitive to both sides of the debate, we have agreed to uphold the decision made in Vellore (2008) to allow profession-based Fields and Networks, and therefore, the proposal to establish a Nursing Care Network has been ratified and The Monitoring and Registration Group (MRG) will now begin the formal process of establishing the Network. We have been assured by relevant entity representatives that the Nursing Care Network will be welcomed and supported within the Collaboration's 'entity web'; a reminder of the professionalism and integrity of the Collaboration's members.

## ESTABLISHMENT OF A CO EDs-METHODS WORKING GROUP

In Vellore (2008), the need was identified for a partnership to form to address some of the strategic issues associated with improving methodological quality involving Co-ordinating Editors (Co-Eds), Methods Groups and the Handbook Advisory Group. The proposal to formalize the existing collaboration between representatives of these groups was approved at the Executive's monthly teleconference on 10 September 2008.

The Working Group will meet on an ad hoc basis and report activity to the Steering Group, and will be reassessed following consultation with the Editor-in-Chief.



## HEALTH 2.0



During his presentation at our meeting in Freiburg, Dave Booker of the Web Team encouraged the Group educate themselves about the new generation of web products and services that are changing the way people use the internet— collectively referred to as 'Web 2.0'. Cochrane.org is already embracing 2.0 through podcasts, RSS feeds, blog links and a number of new internationalization and interactive features currently under development, and we are looking at ways that we can do the same, particularly in taking advantage of web-based project-management and communication tools that will facilitate our international working.

By fully embracing Web 2.0 the Collaboration can be considered a 'Health 2.0' organization, which is defined as an organization that *"leverage[s] the principles of openness, standards, and transparency; utilize[s] the technology tools of collaboration, information exchange, and knowledge transfer; and focuses on delivering value added services that empower health participants (patients, physicians, providers, and payers) with freedom, choice, and accountability for health outcomes* (Scott Schreve MD, Wikipedia.org). It is clear that these principles are closely allied with the Collaboration's own philosophies and put us in a very positive position as a potential leader in the Health 2.0 generation and beyond.

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