

Newsletter - Cochrane Health Care for Older People Field December 2009

Greetings all!

Here is the fourth email Newsletter for the Health Care of Older People Field.

During the past year further consolidation has taken place in the work of the Older People Field. We are delighted that the core group running the field has expanded with the addition of Tracey Howe, who has joined us as a co-convenor. She gives an additional valuable perspective, with her professional background as an academic physiotherapist, and with longstanding links and contributions to the collaboration particularly as a review author. She has taken a lead role in completing relevant (for older people) high-quality systematic reviews for the Cochrane database, including on balance and exercise ¹.

The joint project with the Cochrane Bone Joint & Muscle Trauma Review Group (see below) is now completed, and an abstract of this work has been presented at the recent Colloquium in Singapore.

We continue to provide support to other Cochrane entities including advice on proposed systematic reviews. However the resources to perform this work remain very limited, and much of our effort has been directed at obtaining additional external funding to allow us to substantially increase our activity.

We are delighted to report Dr Barbara van Munster has been successful in her grant application to the 'Nationaal Programma Ouderenzorg' (NPO), a government program in the Netherlands. This funding will support a post-doctorate research assistant in performing Cochrane Systematic Reviews, linking in and collaborating with the Field.

We are in an advanced stage of negotiation with the 'Age-Related Diseases and Health Trust', a new Age-related charity in UK, and hope that concrete plans for funding support will be in place by the end of this calendar year.

Dissemination of Cochrane Reviews

Dissemination of Cochrane Systematic reviews to a wide constituency of people who are involved in healthcare of older people is an important aspect of the work of the field. Therefore we are pleased to report that, following representation of DJS to the editorial board of Age and Ageing in September, the board has agreed in principle to consider relevant Cochrane Systematic Reviews for publication in the journal. It is anticipated that the first such review will be published in Age and Ageing early in 2010. Age and Ageing is the premier European journal for geriatric medicine, with a current impact factor of 3.052. We therefore encourage those of you who are authors to consider submitting your reviews to Age and Ageing, immediately after your primary publication appears on the CDSR.

We continue to contribute to the debate on translation of research evidence into clinical practice and health policy. Gil Ramirez has recently published a thought-provoking review on use of evidence in shaping health policy and improving the health of populations ².

Delivering on priorities: Developing and implementing effective collaboration between a Cochrane Review Group and a Cochrane Field.

We have successfully completed the joint project working with the Bone Joint & Muscle Trauma Review Group to develop and pilot a framework for effective collaboration between a review group and a field (funded by the Cochrane Collaboration). We have demonstrated feasibility of enhanced joint working of a CRG and a Field, enabling targeting of high priority subjects for review and facilitating provision of external feedback from a Field to review authors. However it should be noted that such joint working may not 'speed up' the production of reviews, as many other factors can lead to delays.

The Health of Older People (HOP) project (www.effectiveolderpeoplecare.org).

Basic maintenance work has been performed to allow this searchable website / database to continue at present. It summarises Cochrane systematic review evidence for best practice in healthcare and rehabilitation for frail older people. The focus is on common health problems in old age (i.e. continence, falls etc.) and different models of service organisation (i.e. acute care, long-term care etc.) for older people.

The website consists of a content tree with themes, sub-topics, questions and interventions with evidence statements. The database currently contains evidence statements from more than 250 interventions in relation to 19 different topics and has been openly accessible on the web from 10 September 2007. It is hoped that the website will be of value to healthcare workers and providers of health services for older people giving a rapid overview of the richness of information that is available on Cochrane. The tree structure also allows ready identification of gaps where further reviews could be prioritised. This has been particularly useful in planning priorities for the joint project with the Bone, Joint & Muscle Trauma Review Group.

We would be grateful for any feedback on the website
(heather.moorhead@clinmed.gla.ac.uk).

Future meetings

Unfortunately none of the lead members of the Field were able to attend the Colloquium in Singapore last month, due mainly to a combination of time and financial pressures. However we propose to run a joint session on prioritisation with the Bone, Joint & Muscle Trauma Review Group at the UK Cochrane contributors meeting next spring, using our experiences of running the joint prioritisation project.

Feedback

Please send any comments regarding the Newsletter, or its contents, to heather.moorhead@clinmed.gla.ac.uk. If there are other contacts that you are aware of who would like to receive communications from the Field, please let us know.

Best Wishes,

David Stott / Tracey Howe / Gil Ramirez / Shelley de la Vega

Reference List

- (1) *Howe TE, Rochester L, Jackson A, Banks PM, Blair VA. Exercise for improving balance in older people. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (4):CD004963.*
- (2) *Ramirez G. Improving the health of populations – evidence for policy and practice action. Journal of Evidence Based Medicine 2009;2:216-9.*