

Cochrane Menstrual Disorders & Subfertility Group Newsletter

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Dept Obstetrics & Gynaecology University of Auckland

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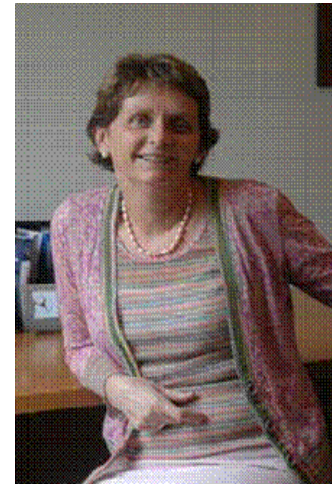
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Editor's Corner

Thank you to everyone who has been in touch with our group over the past year. Our last newsletter was in February 2006 when we were just about to hold our Effective Care in Gynaecology Conference in Auckland celebrating our 10th anniversary. We hosted this for two days and the focus was on clinical trials, systematic review and guideline development. We had 60 attendees and this allowed for some very useful debates. We also had 10 of our editors present which meant that we could hold a very useful editors' workshop on the third day. We were also able to hold a protocol and finishing workshop for reviewers thanks to the support of the NZ Cochrane Branch and the Australasian Cochrane Centre which was welcome. We were able to hold this meeting without the support of industry which was a bit of a first in NZ and we were grateful to the sponsors who included the School of Medicine Foundation, the Auckland District Health Board, Clinical Evidence, NZ Guidelines Group and Wiley. Thank you to everyone who was able to come and thank you to all presenters. Does anyone else want to consider a follow-on meeting in a couple of years' time? If so please get in touch with the editorial office.

We now have published over 100 systematic reviews which is approximately 10 reviews a year. We have just over 50 protocols in the process of becoming systematic reviews and a smaller list of titles. All of this doesn't just happen and in the editorial office, we have a team of staff who are there to help reviewers achieve their



goal of publishing a review. We have had a number of staff changes since last year.

Jane Clarke joined us in January this year as the review group coordinator. Jane has a background in evidence based nursing and education and is now fully in charge of the group's work. Jane and I meet two to three times a week to discuss editorial issues. This has been a tough year for Jane – not only has she had a new job but her husband has had a serious illness which has meant some absences from the office for extended periods. However, thankfully it is all looking positive for the future and her husband Des looks set to make a full recovery.

Heddy Feng joined us in September as the new part-time trial search coordinator and part-time reviewer.

Heddy trained in medicine in Shanghai

and moved to NZ a few years ago. Heddy has a Masters in Public Health. Heddy is still getting used to the job but is now able to help you with searching and locating studies. We had a three month gap when no new trials were added but she is in the process of updating the database. We hope to get her involved in some of the complementary medicine reviews.

Henrietta Wilkinson, also known as Henny, joined us in October as the new clerical assistant and will be helping us in keeping in touch as well as all the other jobs that are required as we publish each three monthly module.

We would also like to introduce you to our new editors, Sue Xioshu Zhu from Sydney and Sofia Dias from Manchester.

Thank you once again to all the reviewers, editors and peer referees that assist us in producing the systematic reviews. I am continually impressed with the number of people who want to do reviews. Please be patient with us as we take your protocols and reviews through the editorial process and ask you to fit into the Cochrane way of doing things. The end product is generally worth it.

Introducing Henny Wilkinson— Clerical Assistant

Henny Wilkinson joined the MDSG team in October in the role of clerical assistant. She works Mondays to Thursdays.



Introducing Heddy Feng - Trials Search Co-ordinator



As a Trials Search Coordinator, I have two main tasks. The first is to manage the Specialised Register of the Cochrane Menstrual Disorders and Subfertility Group and the second is to support reviewers as they prepare their reviews.

Presently I am involved with the following activities:

- * To search a variety of appropriate databases, using highly sensitive search strategies, in order to identify randomised controlled trials relating to the scope of the group
- * To submit the Specialised Register to the Cochrane Collaboration every three months
- * To assist reviewers with designing search strategies, give advice about which database to search, or alternatively, do the searches for them
- * To hand search journals and conference proceedings
- * To obtain copies of articles for reviewers.

Introducing Sue Xioshu Zhu—Editor

Xiashu (Sue) is an academic and researcher in Chinese Medicine Program, Center for Complementary Medicine Research, College of Social and Health Science, University of Western Sydney, Australia.

Her entire career life in the past twenty two years has been always involved in the tertiary education, research, clinical practice in traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM). She obtained her Bachelor and Master degrees from a distinguished TCM University, China in the 1980's and had been involved in teaching and research at the same University for 15 years till 1999 when she migrated to New Zealand then Australia.

In 2002, she was invited to teach the Master course of acupuncture at the Auckland University of Technology, New Zealand. She has been working on a tenure academic position at the University of Western Sydney, Australia since May, 1999. She is now pursuing her PhD degree in health science at the University of Western Sydney, Australia. She is due to complete her degree very soon.

Her major interest is in women's health, in particular, a field of integration of traditional Chinese medicine with Western medicine.

Her strengths are:

Possessing clinical experience and knowledge in gynaecology area – as a gynaecologist, she had practised in the gynaecology department of a teaching hospital in China for 15 years. She has continued her focus as a qualified Chinese medicine herbalist and acupuncturist in Australia for the last 6 years.

Participating in contemporary research in a field of integration of Chinese medicine with Western medicine – she is currently running a few clinical trials in Australia, in relation to the use of Chinese herbal medicine or acupuncture for gynaecological disorders.

Being involved in editorial work for journal/database, such as

-Complementary Therapies in Medicine, Elsevier

-Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, Australia

-Cochrane Menstrual Disorders & Subfertility Group, Cochrane Library, peer review for the protocol on Acupuncture for premenstrual syndrome.



Staff and students at the Cochrane Menstrual Disorders & Subfertility Group at University of Auckland. Lucy-Jane, Alex, Vanessa, Julie and Jane.

Being familiar with the medicine/health related database in both English and Chinese language – she was substantially involved in a NHMRC funded research project, *Chinese Herbal Medicine Toxicology Database*.

She started her systematic review for the Cochrane Library in 2004 (*Chinese herbal medicine for primary dysmenorrhoea*), the protocol is published on *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Review. Issue 2, 2005*.

After all, she is a hard worker, happy to make a contribution towards Cochrane Collaboration.

Introducing Sofia Dias—Editor

I am a statistician doing research at the University of Manchester (UK) and have been involved with the MDSG for 2 years. My main interests within the Collaboration are in subfertility as I am currently researching the implications of poor trial quality in this field, in particular the problems caused by unit of analysis errors. My statistical background includes a degree in Statistics from the University of Lisbon (Portugal) and a PhD in Medical Statistics from the University of Sheffield (UK).



Introducing Alex Bendsdorp -

A Cochrane review can be written anywhere in the world, provided that you have a computer to download the Cochrane handbook and the software Revman which contains the format for the text, and simultaneously is a statistical programme. However, when I, as a Dutch medical student, got the opportunity to write a Cochrane review at the base of the MDSG (Menstrual Disorders and Subfertility Group) in Auckland, New Zealand I was very excited. Not only did I get to travel to one of the most beautiful countries of the world, but I would be working with people who have hands on experience with every phase of writing a review. For six months I have been working on this review, and it has been a learning curve. Professor Farquhar (head of the MDSG group), Jane Clarke and Dr Vanessa Jordan have been of great assistance, from searching the articles, to writing the protocol and the whole review. From the initial search where over 300 articles were found my co-reviewer Ben Cohlen and I have extracted 17 articles on the topic which I will include in the review. Of these 8 provide data which I can use in the meta-analysis. Hopefully my review will be published next spring. I would certainly recommend writing a Cochrane systematic review to anyone interested in scientific research no matter on what field as you learn to properly read articles, analyse them thoroughly and where possible compile the data and analyse them statistically for meta-analysis. And doing it in New Zealand has been great fun for me!!



Sys- Dublin Colloquium 2006 report - Jane Marjoribanks

I am very grateful to have been able to attend the Dublin Colloquium – although unfortunately the opportunity came about because neither our trials Search Coordinator (TSC) nor our Review Group Coordinator were able to go. It was great to have the company of Vanessa Jordan from the New Zealand Branch for the week.

The conference theme was how to make reviews more accessible and how to facilitate their use to inform policy. The first plenary focussed on ways to condense the findings of reviews, for example with summary of findings tables and umbrella reviews. It was suggested that summary of findings tables report the relative risk and absolute risk (out of 100) for each dichotomous outcome, with evaluation of quality using the GRADE system. Continuous outcomes are harder to summarise and might require a set of standardised qualitative outcomes. Umbrella reviews comprise synopses of evidence from different systematic reviews on one topic and if possible combine both direct and indirect comparisons.

The second plenary looked at health as a human right and the role of evidence-based medicine with respect to the HIV/AIDs pandemic. There was an audio-visual link to three health policy makers from the developing world, who spoke of their role in confronting HIV/AIDs. This was followed by three speakers in Dublin, one of whom was Mary Robinson.

The final plenary discussed how to take account of different types of information, and included a fascinating account of how the vast quantity of information being generated by the Human Genome Epidemiology Network is being processed

Most of the parallel and workshop sessions I attended were on reviews of diagnostic accuracy studies and I found them very helpful and easy to understand. Topics included including selecting the appropriate population to answer the questions of the review, quality assessment, assessment of heterogeneity, the quality of reporting and methods of combining studies. Two useful tools were highlighted: QUADAS is a method of assessing the quality of diagnostic accuracy studies and STARD is a set of standards for the reporting of such studies. A handbook for reviewers of diagnostic accuracy studies is in preparation and a Cochrane database of such studies is also in the process of being set up.

I sat in on the TSC workshops, where there was *very* lively discussion of the pros and cons of a trial-based

versus a study-based central register. The main objection to a study-based system was the huge amount of work involved in recoding existing entries in CENTRAL.

Although there was no formal MDSG meeting, I met quite a few members of the group – and also appreciated being able to corner a couple of well-known statisticians and ask them elementary questions! Thanks again for the opportunity to go - I feel thoroughly updated and invigorated and ready to battle with the data again.

Julie Brown — Systematic Reviewer

Julie has now been working with MDSG since February 2006, she has published a protocol this year comparing ultrasound guided embryo transfer with clinical touch. This is now under submission as a full review which will hopefully be published in Issue 1 2006 of the Cochrane Library. She is also working on updating four other reviews in the fields of endometriosis and subfertility and has been involved in data extraction for two other reviews, one examining pre-operative antibiotics prior to hysterectomy and one looking at the role of phytoestrogens in relieving menopausal symptoms. She looks forward to another busy schedule in 2007.

Colloquium, Dublin 2006—Andy Vail

Cochranites from around the world gathered in Dublin this October. Dublin is only a short hop from the UK base of many of the statisticians instrumental in developing Cochrane methods. It was therefore no surprise that there was a packed room for the Statistical Methods Group (SMG), as well as several workshops and parallel sessions focusing on statistical developments.

Three recurrent themes were outcome reporting bias, quality assessment and the proposed ‘summary of findings’ table. The first of these is increasingly recognised as the major threat to validity of meta-analyses. This bias occurs because papers often fail to report ‘less interesting’ comparisons, and far too

often ‘less interesting’ is synonymous with ‘not statistically significant’. There are however several steps that reviewers can take to reduce the potential impact. The most fundamental of these is to never allow inclusion or exclusion criteria in the protocol that restrict eligibility according to the reported outcomes of a study. Another is to always report the number of trials and participants contributing to each outcome analysis. Further insight can be gained in reviews where outcomes are structurally related. This occurs in subfertility reviews for example, where it should be noted whether the trials reporting live birth were those that found unusual differences in clinical pregnancy rates.

Quality assessment within Cochrane reviews is soon to be overhauled. Current application of the ABC grade for allocation concealment has been widely misunderstood. The new system will explicitly separate generation of the allocation sequence (computer, random number table, lots, etc) from concealment (third party, telephone, sealed envelopes, etc), and include other factors such as blinding. Recognising that potential for bias depends on the context of the trial, there will also be scope for subjective assessment of the risk to validity from each quality component.

Finally, the proposed ‘summary of findings’ table is intended to produce a brief, user-friendly and standardised format for succinct reporting. Unfortunately the working draft displayed in the opening plenary session contained a single ‘number needed to treat’, without confidence interval and without information regarding what control group proportion this number would apply to. This clearly upset a lot of methodologists in the audience. The SMG meeting was unanimous in opposition to this summary figure, giving the convenors a strong mandate to return to the Steering Group and re-state their concerns.

As ever, this meeting was distinguished by its social aspects and prevailing sense of collaboration and mutual purpose. For anyone who hasn’t attended a Colloquium, I would strongly recommend pencilling next year’s meeting into your diary.

Jane Clarke - Report

Well 2006 is fast coming to a close and I would like to sincerely thank everyone for their support and patience through out this year when my husband suddenly became ill. My role and my colleagues have certainly kept me sane!

Congratulations to all those who have successfully published this year and thank you to all those who have supported this process namely ; the editors, peer reviewers, copy editors and our office staff here in NZ.

Here is our current publication status

Summary as of Issue 1/2007	Total pub. review	109
	Total pub. protocols	54
	Total pub.	163

Now some information for your benefit

- The Cochrane manual was been updated (15/11/06) and is available on the web <http://www.cochrane.org/admin/manual.htm>, the main notable changes were:

Section 2.1.4.2 General criteria for Cochrane Colloquia sponsorships (major update)

Section 2.2.4 Rationale for requiring Cochrane authors to publish their review in The Cochrane Library first (rationale withdrawn in November 2006, pending further discussions by the Publishing Policy Group)

- Please include your search strings in your protocols / reviews
- Please keep your abstracts under the 400 word this limit which is imposed upon us by the databases such as Medline
- Please ensure your contact details are kept current
- When you are about to submit a completed piece please ensure it is accompanied by the appropriate checklist (these are available on request)
- Reviews that are not updated within a reasonable time may be withdrawn which also means that the author loses free library access.
- Our office shall have limited coverage over the three week period Xmas into Jan 2007, we shall be clearing emails.

THE NEW ZEALAND ORDER OF MERIT

The New Zealand Order of Merit, an Order of Chivalry, was instituted by Royal Warrant, dated 30 May 1996.

The Queen has been pleased, on the occasion of the celebration of The Queen's Birthday 2006, to appoint to The New Zealand Order of Merit to:

Professor Cynthia Margaret **FARQUHAR** of Auckland.

For services to women's health.

We would all like to recognise the appointment of this honour – congratulations Cindy!

Important dates for 2007

Please note these deadlines take priority over all other work and you may experience delays around these dates

Submission deadline for peer review issue 2, 2007 31/12/06

Publication issue 1, 2007 24/01/07

Copy editing deadline issue 2, 2007 31/01/07

Module deadline issue 2, 2007 21/02/07

Submission deadline for peer review issue 3 01/4/07

Publication issue 2, 2007 18/04/07

Copy editing deadline issue 3, 2007 1/05/07

Module deadline issue 3, 2007 23/05/07