



Inside

UPDATES

- 2 *Groups now*
- 3 *From the editor*
- 13 *San Antonio Center*
- 14 *Newsletters*

FEATURES

- 6 *Developments in publishing*
- 7 *Applicability and recommendations*
- 10 *Impressions of the 1996 Colloquium*

ACTIVITIES

- 4 *Menstrual disorders*
- 5 *Cystic fibrosis*
Older people field
- 8 *Getting together*
Training workshops
- 9 *Identification of trials*

NOTICEBOARD

- 9 *1998 Colloquium*
- 15 *Available now*
- 16 *Cochrane centres*

The 4th Colloquium - the Australasian way!

The 4th Cochrane Colloquium was a great success. Not only was the weather splendid in Adelaide, but so were the scientific energy, the wine, and the warmth among the over 400 collaborators that had found it important enough to travel to what at a glimpse on a globus might look as the end of the world.

For those being there, it soon became evident that Adelaide rather could be the starting point of the world! Chris Silagy and his team had organised everything down to every detail and nothing went wrong. If you have ever wondered how God created the world in seven days, you should have seen Chris Silagy control the Business Meeting.

The abstracts contained good news. Alessandro Liberati deserved this year's award, demonstrating that classical Cochrane systematic reviews and meta-analyses gave the same estimate of the odds ratios of interventions as

more laborious meta-analyses on individual patient data. More studies as this ought to be done. Further, studies demonstrated that it is worth looking for RCTs and CCTs in non-English medical databases as well as patent databases.

Compared with earlier Colloquia - I have witnessed the first and third - this Australian one was very focused and gave most of us the clear impression that the Collaboration is moving fast in the right direction. However, this should not distract us from the fact that piles of medical journals need full text searching, and the fact that *The Cochrane Library* will not be the reference before the number of valid systematic reviews has increased substantially. Let us all hope that the era of politics and semantics is over and the era of systematic reviews is in.

Christian Gluud (Copenhagen, Denmark) More inside ...

The Cochrane Collaboration

Preparing, maintaining, and disseminating systematic reviews of the effects of health care





Cochrane News is the international newsletter of the Cochrane Collaboration (UK Registered Charity No 1045921; Registered in England No 3044323). It is produced quarterly by the Australasian Cochrane Centre, and distributed by Cochrane centres worldwide (details listed on back cover).

Cochrane News is edited by Hilda Bastian. The views expressed are those of the authors, and are not necessarily shared by the Cochrane Collaboration, or the editor. Cartoons and illustrations this issue by Greg Smith (pages 2, and), and Hilda Bastian. **Contributions** are welcome to the editor at:

Cochrane News
 The Australasian Cochrane Centre
 Flinders Medical Centre
 Bedford Park SA 5051, Australia
 Phone: 61 8 8204 5399, Fax: 61 8 8370 3539
 E-mail: hilda.bastian@flinders.edu.au

Deadline for next issues:
 No 10 by 28 February 1997
 No 11 by 15 May 1997
 No 12 by 15 August 1997
 No 13 by 15 November 1997

Cochrane Groups

Full details in The Cochrane Library, or from the nearest Cochrane centre (see back page):
Collaborative Review Groups

Acute respiratory infections (Australia)
 Airways (UK)
 Breast cancer (Australia)
 Cystic Fibrosis (UK)
 Dementia & cognitive impairment (UK)
 Depression, anxiety & neurosis (New Zealand)
 Diabetes (UK)
 Effective professional practice (UK)
 Epilepsy (UK)
 Gynaecological cancers (UK)
 Hepato-biliary (Denmark)
 Hypertension (USA)
 Incontinence (UK)
 Infectious diseases (UK) (see page 9)
 Inflammatory bowel disease (Canada)

Movement disorders (Portugal)
 Musculoskeletal (Canada)
 (with 12 sub-groups)
 Neonatal (Canada)
 Oral health (USA)
 Peripheral vascular diseases (UK)
 Pregnancy and Childbirth (Australia & UK)
 Prostatic diseases (USA) *NEW*
 Schizophrenia (UK)
 Stroke (UK)
 Subfertility (UK)
 Tobacco addiction (UK)
 Wounds (UK)

Fields

Complementary medicine (USA)
 Health care of older people (UK)
 Health promotion in young people (UK)
 Physical therapies & rehabilitation (Netherlands)
 Primary health care (Australia)

Getting the rest

There are now some 112,000 trials in the *Cochrane Controlled Trials Register* - which is really quite impressive. But, as Christian Gluud reminds us on this issue's cover, we can by no means rest on these laurels. It has been suggested that there could be as many as 500,000 trials out there. If so, we are not yet a quarter of the way there, and we are going to have to turn over an awful lot of stones to find the rest.

Then there are the systematic reviews these need to be turned into: a figure of a few thousand has been bandied about as the goal for those. That's some challenge, but even that is not really enough.

On page 12, Xavier Bonfill talks about the importance of really making all this count: if the information is not used, then what, after all, is the point? You could feel a ripple of anxiety through the plenary hall at the Colloquium when Hazel Fraser reported that the Stroke Group had discovered that their reviews were really only being cited by collaborators themselves. Patricia Crowley from the Pregnancy and Childbirth Group reminded everyone that basically, it was ever thus, and you just had to keep working at it. Change is not always easy to bring about.

With such a long road ahead, perhaps it is not surprising that, along with the energy, enthusiasm, and excitement that so pervaded the 1996 Colloquium in Adelaide, there was also something of an undercurrent of apologies. So many people are doing so much - often on top of other workloads in their lives - yet it never seems to be enough. Nor will it be for quite some time. One of the main messages I got from the Colloquium was that we really need to give ourselves, and others, a break sometimes.

As Greg Smith points out on page 8, sometimes the best thing to do is just get some rest!

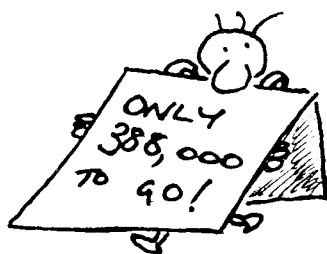
Taking it a bit easier on occasion is critical to getting things done in the longterm. We need to keep the momentum going without discouraging people or burning them out. We need to be able to be critical without being derogatory of people's actions and choices, or we could create more resistance than change.

Feedback from the Colloquium was yet another reminder that we need to resist taking ourselves too seriously, and creating icons which all but beg to be derided and demolished. If we are too sure of ourselves, we could fail to see our own errors of judgment. We need to celebrate as we go, but we really do have to guard against "Cochrane-ism".

On page 11, Jini Hetherington reminds us of other balancing acts we need to master. She points out, too, that we can see the framework for achieving it all taking real shape and dynamism now. Surely, we have set

ourselves a large task. But after all, we've come this far, and gathered together so many of the people and materials we need: what's another few (hundred) thousand?

Hilda Bastian, Editor (Adelaide, Australia)



New Secretariat Administrator

The Steering Group is delighted to announce that Jini Hetherington is the Collaboration's new Administrator. Contact Jini at:

PO Box 726, Oxford OX2 7UX, UK
Tel: 44 1865 310 138, Fax: 44 1865 516 311
E-mail: jhetherington@cochrane.co.uk

Focus on...

Menstrual Disorders

The Menstrual Disorders Group was registered in August 1995, but was unable to attract funding for a Review Group Coordinator until May 1996. The editorial base is located in Auckland, New Zealand. In addition to Cindy Farquhar (Coordinating Editor) and Ruth Jepson (Review Group Coordinator), there are now a number of people working in and around the editorial base, including three handsearchers/reviewers, two summer students, one coder, and one clerical person. We have also managed to get funding for a part-time research assistant to work at the editorial base on reviews of menorrhagia. All this activity in one small office! The rest of the Group is very spread out with the majority being based in the UK (including Inez Cooke, our other Editor).



The scope of the Group includes premenstrual syndrome, chronic pelvic pain, endometriosis, dysmenorrhoea (painful periods), heavy menstrual bleeding, hirsutism, polycystic ovaries and the menopause. We have been admonished for referring to the menopause as a menstrual disorder, and any new name suggestions will be given due consideration!

The Group has been very productive in the last few months, and up to 12 reviews are expected to be completed within the next year. Eight protocols appear on the Cochrane Library, two are presently being reviewed by editors, and a further two are expected to be submitted shortly. Areas currently being reviewed include treatments for endometriosis, hirsutism, heavy menstrual bleeding and HRT and endometrial hyperplasia. Reviews planned for the future include several covering the menopause including treatment of vasomotor symptoms, depression and anxiety, and loss of libido.

Cindy and Ruth led a very successful meeting in Sydney in November, during a large menopause conference, which resulted in around 50 people wanting to become more involved in the activities of the Group, particularly in treatments for the menopause.

We are very fortunate to have strong consumer input, particularly from within Auckland. We are involving consumers both as eternal peer reviewers (commenting on the review at its various stages), reviewers and, hopefully, handsearchers. They have been particularly successful at "spreading the word" to other consumers and disseminating information in their newsletters.

If you would like more information about the Group, please contact Ruth Jepson by e-mail at: r.jepson@auckland.ac.nz (full address from your local Cochrane centre).

Ruth Jepson and Cindy Farquhar (Auckland, New Zealand)

Cystic Fibrosis

The Cochrane Cystic Fibrosis Group was registered with the Collaboration in September 1995. The editorial base is in Liverpool, UK and comprises Rosalind Smyth (coordinating editor), Katharine Cheng (research fellow), and Jill Simpson (coordinator). The Group's other editors are Sarah Walters (Birmingham, UK) and Gerard Ryan (Australia). Consumers are well represented in the editorial group as our coordinator is the parent of a cystic fibrosis child and one of our editors, Sarah Walters, has cystic fibrosis.

We have a number of reviewers from around the world. These reviewers come from a range of disciplines involved in cystic fibrosis care, including physiotherapy, diabetics and nursing, as well as medicine.

Three protocols are registered on the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* and several others are under review. Interventions being studied include ursodeoxycholic acid in cystic fibrosis related liver disease, oral steroids, inhaled steroids, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug therapy, oral calorie supplements, DNase therapy, nebulised antibiotic therapy, and vaccines.

The group is developing close liaison with a number of cystic fibrosis clinical trials groups. This will enable us to encourage researchers to undertake a systematic review of an intervention before planning a randomised controlled trial of that intervention. We, in turn, hope that the systematic reviews will identify areas where further research is needed.

Interest in and awareness of the group amongst patients and carers is spreading rapidly, and we have been thrilled with the response to date. If you would like to learn more about the activities of the group or would like to contribute in any way, please contact us by e-mail at jsimpson@liv.ac.uk (full address at your local Cochrane centre).

Jill Simpson (Liverpool, UK)

Older People

The Cochrane Collaboration's Field on the Health Care of Older People was developed by an international, interdisciplinary group of participants coordinated by Edward Dickinson, Associate Director of the Royal College of Physicians Research Unit in the United Kingdom. The Field is coordinated by an executive group with wide input from different disciplines and interests. Membership spans 27 countries across all the continents of the world. The buildup to the establishment of the Field took over 18 months work which was initiated by Paula Rochon (Toronto, Canada).

The Field is being supported by a series of seminars at national and international conferences, where people will be able to hear details of how the Field operates, learn how they can become further involved, and see demonstrations of *The Cochrane Library*. For example, a successful seminar was held at the annual meeting of the American Geriatrics Society in May 1996, in Chicago, and was attended by over 50 interested physicians. In addition, a newsletter, *Connector*, will be distributed on a regular basis, and an Internet site will be produced.

The goal of the Field is to improve the health care of older people by facilitating the production and implementation of relevant Cochrane reviews. Individuals can contribute to the work of the Field by helping to identify reports of trials, assisting directly in the production of Cochrane reviews, writing commentaries on Cochrane reviews, and spreading information about the Cochrane Collaboration and the work of the Field.

All participants will be asked to help prioritise topics for which reviews are needed, so these can be linked to the views of users and fed into the Collaboration. (The Field can be contacted by e-mail at 101516.176@compuserve.com, full address from your local Cochrane centre.)

Edward Dickinson (London, UK)

Developments in Collaboration Publishing

The last few months have seen considerable activity in relation to reviewing the arrangements for dissemination and distribution of *The Cochrane Library*. It is not even two years since the first issue of *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)*. With the subsequent inclusion of the *York Database of Reviews of Effectiveness* and *The Cochrane Controlled Trials Register*, *The Cochrane Library* came into being about six months ago.

Until recently, *The Cochrane Library* was only available on CD-ROM and disks, and was distributed solely by the *British Medical Journal's* publishing group (including its agents around the world). Although there have been many copies sold, the Collaboration's Steering Group believes that there is a long way to go before the potential market for *The Cochrane Library* is saturated. Given that one of our stated aims is to promote the accessibility of our systematic reviews, the Steering Group has been exploring strategies to facilitate increased dissemination. The first major step forward was the decision to enter an agreement with Synapse Publishing Inc to make the *CDSR* available via the Internet. Look out for news of the 1997 launch shortly.

At the recent Steering Group meeting, a decision was made to approach the *British Medical Journal* publishing group to modify our agreement with them to allow for other distributors to also promote *The Cochrane Library*. We were delighted that they generously agreed to our request, and our contract has since been revised.

Another major decision was to enter into a special relationship with Update Software, the company that has been responsible for producing the *CDSR* and the *Library* since the Collaboration's inception (as well as the predecessor *Oxford Database of Perinatal Trials*).

The special relationship that the Collaboration has entered into with Update Software ensures that they are the sole

producers of the full *Cochrane Library*, in return for their active involvement and support in the Collaboration's core activities. (Subscriptions directly with Update will result in greater income for the Collaboration - see page 15.) Under this new arrangement, Update Software will be the sole producer, but there will be an opportunity for a larger number of distributors in order to maximise dissemination. The *British Medical Journal* publishing group will continue to be one of these distributors.

A Publishing Policy Group has been established as a standing committee of the Steering Group to oversee the distribution and pricing arrangements of the Collaboration's products. This group is chaired by Chris Silagy and has representatives from the Steering Group, the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination in York, and Update Software. Its primary role is to consider potential opportunities for distributing the *Library*, either in its entirety, or in specialised subsets.

The Publishing Policy Group meets on a regular bi-monthly basis, and will be seeking the support of all registered entities to assist in the task of promoting *The Cochrane Library* to all our friends and networks. The Group will provide regular updates on distribution arrangements through *Cochrane News*.

*Chris Silagy, Chair, Collaboration Steering Group
(Adelaide, Australia)*

Can you help translate?

The Italian Cochrane Centre is creating a database of people able to help with translation for the Collaboration. Contact Elena Telaro at the Centre, or by e-mail: telaro@irfmm.mnegri.it

Applicability and Recommendations of Reviews

When a systematic review concludes an intervention is effective, what are the implications for clinical practice? In particular, how strong are any inferences about treatment, and does the strength of inference differ between subgroups of patients, or people with different sets of values?

Being able to answer these questions will be crucial in the process of going from the evidence assembled by the Collaboration to specific health care recommendations and clinical practice. Hence it will be important to develop a clear understanding of this process. The recently formed Methods Working Group on Applicability and Recommendations was created with the objective of exploring this issue.

The group is interested in both formal theories on the process of making inferences about trial and review results, and in how best to present results to allow interpretation by health care workers and consumers. Clearly, the ideal is to allow CDSR users to make an informed and rational choice that takes into account their own values and circumstances, and the heterogeneity of their patients.

We have used a 5-step process when interpreting results of a trial or review:

1. What are the beneficial and harmful effects?
2. Is there predictable variation in the relative effects?

3. How do the effects vary with risk level?
4. What are the predicted absolute risk reductions for individuals?
5. Weigh up the overall benefits and harms.

In each of these steps we will need to consider the quality and precision of the information used. Thus a full formal working through of these steps will generally be beyond the scope of the individual reviewer. However, thinking through them, and generating some quantitative information, will be important when writing the discussion and implication sections of the reviews. Users of reviews, particularly those producing guidelines, should more formally and explicitly use the steps before making recommendations.

For those interested in reading further about this area, our "unblinded" recommendations would be the articles by Glasziou and Irwig (*Brit Med J* 1995; 311: 1356-59) and Guyatt et al (*JAMA* 1995; 274: 1800-04). Our blinded recommendations list is much longer but we don't know the authors or source! An annotated bibliography and recommendations are under development.

Those interested in helping out or finding out more can contact us by e-mail at:

glasziou@spider.uq.oz.au
guyatt@fhs.csu.mcmaster.ca

Paul Glasziou and Gordon Guyatt (Brisbane, Australia and Hamilton, Canada)



Getting Together

New Groups Emerging

An important part of the development of a collaborative review group is what's called an "exploratory meeting", which gathers together those interested in forming a Cochrane group. If you would like to know more about any of the groups or meetings, contact the sponsoring Cochrane centre (noted in brackets).

Meetings to explore the possibility of developing review groups in the following areas are currently scheduled in 1997:

Drug addiction: 17-18 January 1997, Rome (Italian Cochrane Centre)

HIV/AIDS: 6 March, San Francisco (San Francisco Cochrane Center) (preliminary meeting only)

Field on child health: 1 May, Washington (Baltimore Cochrane Center)

Training Workshops

Australasian Cochrane Centre: *Introductory workshops* - March in Thailand; 9 April, Sydney; 5 May, Auckland; 19 November, Adelaide; *Protocol* - 10 April, Sydney; 6 May, Auckland; 19 November, Adelaide; *RevMan* - 10 April, Sydney; 6 May, Auckland; 10 July, Canberra; 17 November, Adelaide. Workshops for *consumers* (Sydney, Adelaide, and New Zealand) and *identification of trials* to be notified.

Dutch Cochrane Centre: *How to develop a protocol* - 20 March and 21 August; *Entering a review into RevMan* - 21 March and 22 August.

Nordic Cochrane Centre: *Protocol development* - 5 May and 13 November, Copenhagen; *Use of RevMan* - 6 May and 14 November, Copenhagen; *Handsearching* - 12 November, Copenhagen.

San Antonio Cochrane Center: *Conducting systematic reviews (including RevMan)* - 12-14 March, San Antonio.

UK Cochrane Centre: *Developing a protocol* - 10 February, Edinburgh; 20 March, Oxford; 12 May, Oxford; 23 June, Oxford; 18 September, Oxford; 17 November, Liverpool; *Getting a review into RevMan* - 11 February, Edinburgh; 21 March, Oxford; 13 May, Oxford; 24 June, Oxford; 19 September, Oxford; 18 November, Liverpool. Places on workshops are limited, with priority to UK-based members of registered review groups.

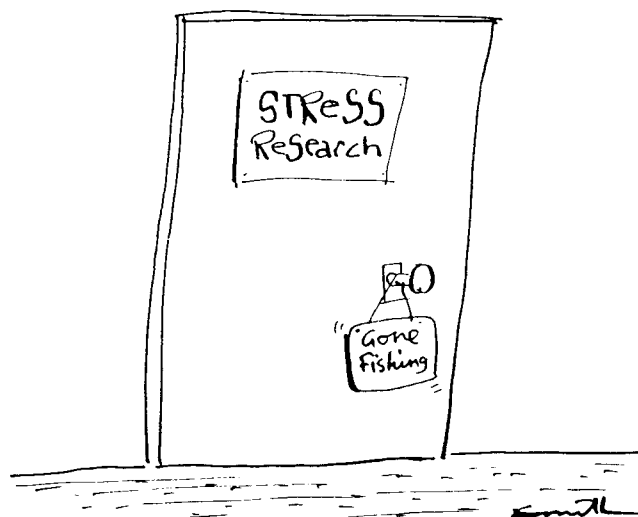
For more details of these & other workshops, contact your nearest Cochrane centre.

UK Consultation Meeting

The next consultation for UK contributors will be held in Oxford, 11-12 April 1997 at St Catherine's College, Oxford. Contact the UK Cochrane Centre for details.

Planning ahead?

The Colloquium will be held in Baltimore in 1998 and Italy in 1999.



Identification of trials

We continue to receive and process the results of searches for controlled clinical trials. Thank you to all who have contributed, and who continue to contribute, to their identification! (See *Cochrane Counts* below)

Through ongoing discussions with review group coordinators, the Trials Registers Development Group (TRDG) is developing a central register for use by review groups and Cochrane reviewers. "Central", as it is being called, will be designed to facilitate the transfer of identified citations between groups. Everyone will send material to the Baltimore Cochrane Center for inclusion in Central, which is being developed to ease the backlog of search results.

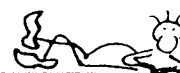
Citations will be drawn from Central for the external products of Cochrane searching efforts, which are available to the "general public" - currently MEDLINE and CCTR (*Cochrane Controlled Trials Register* in *The Cochrane Library*). Please watch for communication from the TRDG. The database of citations identified but not indexed in MEDLINE will be contributed to the CCTR. We are also awaiting word from the National Library of Medicine as to developments with the ancillary MEDLINE database (see *Cochrane News* No 7).

Karen Robinson, Baltimore Cochrane Center

Cochrane Counts

In 1996, 27,086 citations were sent to MEDLINE for tagging as trials, bringing the grand total to 70,799 since 1994. More than 18,000 of those were spotted by hand-searchers. Altogether, this is more than 80% of the total trials which can be found by searching MEDLINE! What's more, there are now more than 110,000 trials in the *Cochrane Controlled Trials Register*.

Monica Fischer, from the Nordic Cochrane Centre, surveyed review groups: 19 responded, with a total of 604 active reviewers, ranging from 7 to 65 in each group.



Colloquium by the Canals

"Using the Evidence"
Amsterdam, The Netherlands
8-12 October 1997

In conjunction with the 2nd
International Conference on the
Scientific Basis of Health Services
(5-8 October)

ABSTRACTS BY 1 MARCH 1997

The Colloquium will focus on dissemination and implementation of evidence, and the evaluation of evidence in practice.

Registration forms from SB/CC 97 Congress office, Bureau PAOG, Tafelbergweg 25, 1105 BC Amsterdam, The Netherlands, telephone 31 20 566 4801, fax 31 20 696 3228.

Can we tell them where you are?

At the moment the only contact details for people in the Collaboration which are accessible on the Internet are those of centre staff and the contact people for Cochrane groups. We will be gradually and systematically working through centres and Cochrane groups to ask associated individuals if they are happy to have their contact details made public on the Internet version of the Cochrane Contact directory (now about 3,000 individuals).

However if you are happy to have your contact details available on the Internet now, please make a specific request to Kelly Binelli at the Australasian Cochrane Centre. The Internet version of the Contact directory can be explored by clicking on the link "Inventory" at: <http://hiru.mcmaster.ca/cochrane/default.htm>

David Badger, Australasian Cochrane Centre

Impressions of the 1996 Colloquium

By the time it was 5pm on 24 October it seemed hard to believe that the 4th International Cochrane Colloquium had come to an end. Almost 18 months of planning by a small dedicated team at the Australasian Cochrane Centre had gone into ensuring that our 400 visitors from around the globe enjoyed their four days of conferencing in Adelaide. Fortunately someone was kind and Adelaide turned on some of its best October weather to greet delegates from Australia and abroad.

The program was packed with good science, plenty of opportunity for meetings and informal gatherings, plus a chance to experience some of the essentials of Australian life - wining, dining, and having fun! Striking a balance between the business needs of the Collaboration and the opportunity to promote the scientific work being undertaken within the Collaboration represented a challenge for Bernie Towler and the scientific committee. To their credit, the end result seemed almost the perfect balance.

One afternoon was devoted to rest and recreation, which allowed people to prepare for the conference dinner. What an evening that was! With the help of Aboriginal dancers and an Australian bush band, the Adelaide Convention Centre came alive with over 300 collaborators dancing the night away. For many it was the highlight of the week. For others the highlight was yet to come! On Thursday afternoon, six active members of the Collaboration took to the floor to debate whether evidence based health care was likely to become a reality. The debate was a great success and a fantastic way to end what had been a highly enjoyable week. Hopefully, it has rejuvenated enthusiasm in the Collaboration, and we look forward to another successful gathering next year in Amsterdam.

Chris Silagy (Adelaide, Australia)

It surely has been an experience! First time to a Cochrane Colloquium, first time in Australia, first time on a honeymoon.

From a scientific point of view, apart from some labyrinthine impairments due to the long trip, it has been an exposure to the contagious factor of enthusiasm that I hope to keep preserved while I will work for the Collaboration. I certainly did not bring home all the concepts and skills I would have liked to, but I felt quite satisfied to be able to express my point of view during the workshop on "how to improve *The Cochrane Library*" or to ascertain that someone else other than me is not really in love with RevMan! I know for sure that I will be more frustrated at the Italian Colloquium so I presume the outcome of this my first Colloquium must be good.

From the geographic point of view, I have been amazed from the variety of landscapes I have seen and that, captured by my camera, are the welcome session for the visitors to our new house!

The honeymoon.....is another story!!

Elena Telaro (Milano, Italy)

This October in Adelaide was for me the most enjoyable Colloquium, made so not only by the high quality of its organisation, presentations, great weather and location, but by the general air of interested involvement. There were two firsts: a meeting over breakfast (hard to believe the mad, long hours we met, and the noisy hotel rooms we tolerated in between!) of staff of all the Cochrane centres, and another of the administrators of those centres. Unique opportunities to benefit from the exchange of common problems and solutions, and well worth repeating.

There were intrigues and dissatisfactions, arguments and conciliatory moves, almost everywhere one turned, but the prevalent

mood was buoyant and hopeful that, four years on, the "above and beyond" efforts of so many people really are producing results.

Yes, sceptics, we certainly need more completed reviews; we need a broader training program, which looks to the training needs of those others who are working with and for the reviewers; we need consumers really getting involved themselves, as well as telling us what we could be doing better; and we need some financial stability, both for the Collaboration as a whole and for collaborative review groups in particular. Perhaps we also need a prod from time to time to remind us that it is the users of health care for whom we are making all this effort. The structures are in place to encourage all these things to happen.

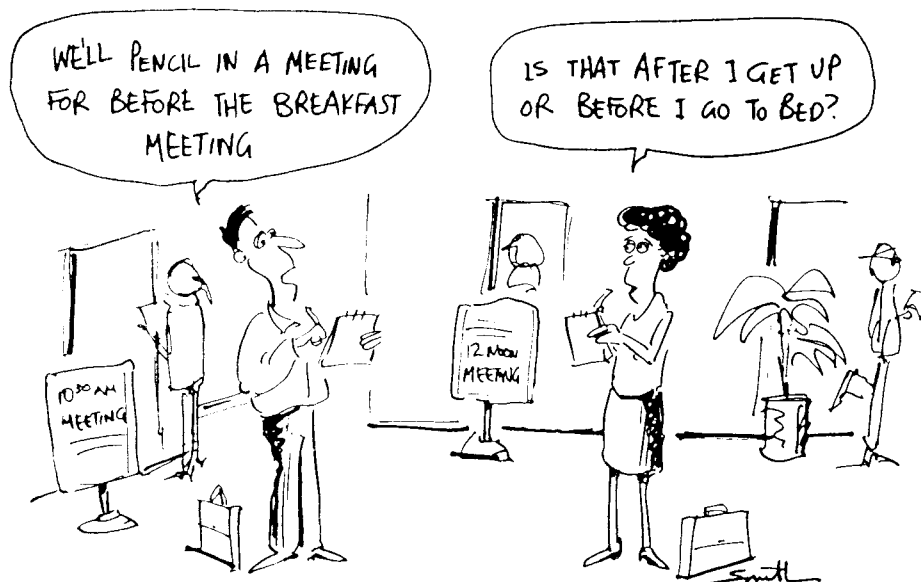
This was the first of these annual events at which the intensive and often intense discussions were intentionally lightened by humour. As much thought and care had been given to our entertainment and enjoyment as to the more serious business that had brought us to Adelaide. The randomisation to a particular restaurant, and then a sealed, opaque envelope on the plate with a "procedure" to be followed, provided much amusement. On the final evening, the performance of music and dance by Aboriginal people was something most of us had never experienced the pleasure of, nor ever will again.

Collaborators danced with energetic collaborators to a lively band, while those more sensible looked on and perhaps kept their breath for more academic exercise. The final Debate brought out unsuspected wit, ingenuity and eloquence on the part of the debaters, bringing the Colloquium to its end on a high note of laughter. Thank you, everyone involved, who worked so hard on our behalf: it was a memorable week for me.

Jini Hetherington (Oxford, UK)

The Colloquium was a very enlightening experience. I found it interesting to place faces with names and meet like-minded individuals from such a wide range of areas and backgrounds. The workshops provided excellent information and guidance to ensure our review group will run efficiently and expertly. Networking with persons involved closely with linked fields such as the Consumer Network and the Cancer Network, to name but a few, can only enhance our work here with the Prostatic Diseases Review Group.

I assumed Australia was an interesting and hospitable place, and I was certainly not proven wrong. The Australians I encountered were very friendly and accommodating. I took a brief side trip to Mount Kosciusko, enjoying both the climb and the view, and to



see some of the local fauna and flora. Some of the landscape I encountered looked very similar to some sections of the United States, the coast reminding me of California (without the congestion). Australia is refreshingly wide-open and uncluttered. I wish I had more time to explore other regions. Hopefully down the road!

Timothy Wilt (Minneapolis, USA)

Adelaide 1996 was my first Cochrane Colloquium, and I hope not my last. I've already started scheming on how to make it to the next one in Amsterdam! For me as coordinator for the Depression, Anxiety, and Neurosis Group it was my first opportunity to meet face to face with a whole host of people with whom I've been communicating electronically over the past year, but never met in person. It was a bit like meeting old friends!

It was enormously helpful to meet and chat with people doing similar things, experiencing similar joys and difficulties, and to be able to find the answers and solutions to some of those ongoing problems. I found the workshops very interesting and educational, my biggest problem being how to deal with those inevitable clashes between papers and workshop times - however can I choose which I'd rather attend?!!

My only regret is that while everyone else was out on the free afternoon enjoying the wildlife we were having our review group get-together. Next year I'll put the hard word on our editors to schedule the meeting over dinner (though I don't know that we'd be as productive)!

Next year I'll be going to the 5th Cochrane Colloquium as consumer liaison contact for our group (not a coordinator), so I'm looking forward to meeting a whole new bunch of varied and interesting people. So until then ...

Carolyn Doughty (Christchurch, New Zealand)

*The Colloquium abstracts are available on the Australasian Cochrane Centre's home page:
<http://som.flinders.edu.au/fusa/cochrane/>*

The Australian Colloquium has served, in my opinion, to reinforce the universal character of the Cochrane Collaboration. The accents and faces in Adelaide were substantially different from those seen in other Colloquia. It was truly satisfying to see that diversity increases while the Collaboration grows, and that this trend not only is not weakening it, but in fact is reinforcing the spirit of the Collaboration instead. In this sense we, the people from Mediterranean and Ibero-American countries face a challenge: that our mark also be apparent in the Cochrane Collaboration.

The theme of dissemination taken up in the congress is crucial, and despite the many interesting ideas expressed, I believe that there is much left to say (and to do!). It is this which, in large part, will give the impact of our work. It is clear that those who participate in the production of Cochrane activities are personally and professionally enriched in the process (as Antonio Machado, a great Spanish poet, wrote, "there is no road, it is made by walking"). But the objective should also be to arrive - that the population at large benefits from our work. Although arrival at one place always supposes a departure for a new destination ...

Finally, thanks to our Australasian friends for their hospitality and hard work!

Xavier Bonfill (Barcelona, Spain)

From the evaluation forms:

Sense of hard-working fun and solidarity

Speak more slowly, please

The best balanced program I've ever seen at a conference

Are there any "cons" to Cochrane thinking?

Allow more time for audience participation and discussion

The excitement of really invigorating thinking

Good organisation, sense of idealism, multidisciplinary, no prima donnas

The San Antonio Cochrane Center

The San Antonio Cochrane Center began operation in the spring of 1995, and is geographically positioned to serve Cochrane participants in the Central and Western United States. Additionally, we support Mexico and other Latin American countries.

The Center is dedicated to help develop training programs for the Collaboration. It receives funding from the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) through the Health Services Research and Development Service. We actively assist the Management Decision and Research Center's Technology Assessment Program and provide training to VHA investigators interested in systematic reviews.

The Center acts as clearing-house for the US centers and Latin America. We coordinate the distribution of the Collaboration newsletter in the US and Mexico to individuals already associated with, or who showed interest in, the Collaboration. Each year we offer two local workshops in the US on "How to Conduct Cochrane Systematic Reviews" including a session on the Review Manager. Another is offered in Mexico, dependent on resources.

The Center supports the activities of the Hypertension and Prostate Review Groups, and is present to foster the development of new groups.

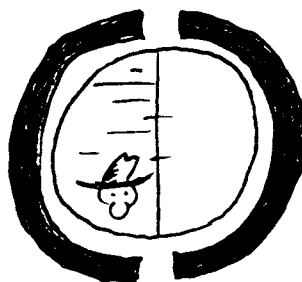
Specific focus: training

The Center consolidates training opportunities reported from all Cochrane entities and assists in the effort to disseminate this information.

In collaboration with Andy Oxman, Cynthia Mulrow and colleagues from the Center helped the revision of the Collaboration *Handbook: How to Conduct a Cochrane Systematic Review*. A limited

amount of these manuals are still available. Anyone who wishes to receive a copy can contact the Center. They will be provided until the supply is exhausted. The *Handbook* is also available on the Internet (see below). We are developing a local "Hand Search Workshop/Manual", and plan to pilot a long distance interactive training program in 1997.

Cynthia D Mulrow, General Internist, is the Director of the San Antonio Cochrane Center. We welcome Elaine Chiquette as our new Associate Director. Members of the staff include Joe Cavallero (Education Service Specialist and Center administrator), Michael Brand (Information Specialist for the Center & Coordinator for the Hypertension Review Group), John Cornell (statistician), Valerie Lawrence, Robert Badgett (affiliates to the Center as workshop instructors), Christine Aguilar (Fellow) and Annie Almanza (Secretary).



Elaine Chiquette (San Antonio, USA)

The Handbook on the Internet

Available at the Cochrane centre FTP sites:

Canadian: (in /handbook sub-directory)

connect to: hiru.mcmaster.ca

login: cochrane, password: archie

Australasian:

connect to: healthinfo.fmc.flinders.edu.au

login: cochrane, password: australia

UK: (in pub/handbook sub-directory)

connect to: ftp.cochrane.co.uk

login: cochrane, password: your e-mail

The hypertext version (HANDBOOK.hlp) cannot be downloaded. There are also Word files (A4_HB_tx.doc, A4_HB_ap.doc, A4_HB_gl.doc; and Letter format: It_HB_tx.doc, It_HB_ap.doc, It_HB_gl.doc).
Questions to: clare.glenton@labmed.uio.no

Around the Newsletters

News on fields

From a report of the first fields' meeting (London, February 1996) by Riekie de Vet and Rob de Bie in the first edition of the newsletter for the Physical Therapy & Rehabilitation Field (Sept 1996):

"The meeting was attended by representatives of proposed and existing fields. The theme of the meeting was 'Fields working and learning together to make the best contribution to the CC'.

"As a representative for the Fields in the Cochrane Steering Committee Dr Edward Dickinson was chosen. It is the intention of all Field coordinators to convene on a regular basis and help each other as much as possible in our efforts to reach our goals... A special Field newsletter will be made by Mark Lodge.

"At the moment, the following proposed and existing fields can be found within the Cochrane Collaboration: cancer, complementary medicine, developing countries, health care of older people, health promotion, intensive care, nursing, pharmaceuticals, physical therapy & rehabilitation, placebo effects, primary care, social work, socio-economic differences, surgery and anaesthesia, and vaccines."

Cancer and the Collaboration

From a report by Chris Williams in the first issue of the Cancer Network's newsletter (Oct 1996):

"Rather than a single large CRG [collaborative review group] we plan a loose confederation of site and problem specific CRGs for cancer. The Network exists to promote the interest of cancer in the Collaboration and to find ways of helping CRGs to come together and then support their work... Some problem-orientated CRGs may decide to include cancer within their remit. It seems likely that the Prostate

Diseases CRG will include cancer among its aims. Other groups that are likely at present to go down this route include the Hepato-biliary and Oral Groups. At the same time it is the role of the Network to identify individuals who can work together to form new cancer-specific CRGs... The Network has recently supported the development of three new CRGs in Breast Cancer, Gynaecological Cancer, and for Pain, Palliative and Supportive Care... The Network will also have a key role in coordinating searching of the cancer literature, a task which is already underway...

"We also intend to produce a Cochrane Cancer Library which will be specific for anyone wanting information in the area of cancer. As well as the database on controlled trials and systematic reviews already found in *The Cochrane Library*, we want to provide lots of other information of added value to all of the main groups who may use the Library. To this end we will be surveying several thousand people to get an idea of their needs."

Home Page News

The **Nordic Cochrane Centre** home page is at: <http://inet.uni-c.dk/~rifopg/>

The guide to **using RevMan 3** is now on the Canadian home page (go to QuickList & What's New): <http://hiru.mcmaster.ca/cochrane/default.htm>

The Australasian home page is now also accessible from the **German Home Page**: <http://www.imbi.uni-freiburg.de/cochrane/>

More group guidelines

The Acute Respiratory Infections Group published their guidelines in their November 1996 newsletter (issue No 7), while the Menstrual Disorders Group included their process for pre-publication peer review in their November newsletter as well (issue No 3).

Getting The Cochrane Library

The Cochrane Library is published and distributed by Update Software. Direct subscription ensures maximum benefit for the Cochrane Collaboration.

Updated every quarter, *The Cochrane Library* is available in two formats: CD-ROM for Windows, and 3½ inch disk for Windows. It contains:

- *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)*: 159 Cochrane reviews, and 199 protocols for reviews underway, plus information about the Cochrane Collaboration (increasing each issue)
- *The York Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effectiveness (DARE)*: including structured abstracts of 598 further systematic reviews filtered by the NHS Centre for Reviews and Dissemination in York, and references to over 1,000 more
- *The Cochrane Controlled Trials Register (CCTR)*: a bibliography of over 110,000 controlled trials (complete only on the CD-ROM version)
- *The Cochrane Review Methodology Database (CRMD)*: a bibliography of articles on systematic review

Payable by cheques in correct currency to Update Software & by Mastercard or Visa. (Apply direct for Network licence details.)

From the UK: Personal subscription costs are £95.00 (plus £16.63 VAT in UK only), and £120.00 (plus £21.00 VAT in UK only) for institutions: non EC countries, please add £15.00 postage.

Update Software
Summertown Pavilion, Middle Way
Oxford OX2 7LG, UK
Tel: 44 1865 513 902, Fax: 44 1865 516 918
E-mail: update@cochrane.co.uk

From the USA: Personal subscription costs are US\$176.00 (plus \$12.76 sales tax for California residents only), and US\$225.00 for institutions (plus \$16.31 sales tax for California only). Postage included within North America: for other Pacific rim countries, add US\$20.00 for postage.

Update Software
936 La Rueda, Vista CA 92084, USA
Tel: 1 619 727 6792, Fax: 1 619 734 4351
E-mail: 103337.654@compuserve.com

BMJ Distributors

The Cochrane Library is also available from the following BMJ distributors: contact directly for subscription details

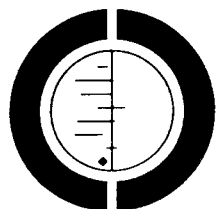
American College of Physicians
Independent Mall West
Sixth St at Race
Philadelphia PA 19106 1572, USA
Tel: 1 215 351 2400
Fax: 1 215 351 2644

Australian Medical Association (WA)
PO Box 133
Nedlands WA 6009 Australia
Tel: 61 9 273 3000
Fax: 61 9 273 3017

British Medical Journal Publishing Group
PO Box 295, London WC1H 9TE, UK
Tel: 44 171 383 6185 (or 6245)
Fax: 44 171 383 6662

Canadian Medical Association
1867 Alta Vista Drive, Ottawa,
Ontario K1G 3Y6, Canada
Tel: 1 613 731 9331
Fax: 1 613 523 0937

Medical Association of South Africa
MASA House, Central Square
Pinelands 7405, South Africa
Tel: 27 11 531 3081
Fax: 27 11 531 4126



**THE COCHRANE
COLLABORATION**

Preparing, maintaining and disseminating
systematic reviews of the effects of health care

*For more information,
contact your
nearest Cochrane
centre*

Australasian Cochrane Centre*
Flinders Medical Centre
Bedford Park SA 5042
AUSTRALIA
Tel: 61 8 8204 5399
Fax: 61 8 8276 3305
E-mail: cochrane@flinders.edu.au

Baltimore Cochrane Center
Dept of Epidemiology &
Preventive Medicine
University of Maryland
506 West Fayette Street
Baltimore MD 21201
USA
Tel: 1 410 706 0546
Fax: 1 410 328 0110
cochrane@umabnet.ab.umd.edu

Brazilian Cochrane Centre
Unidade de Meta-analise
Universidade Federal de Sao
Paulo
Rua Pedro de Toledo 598
CEP 04039-001-Sao Paulo-SP
BRAZIL
Tel: 55 11 570 0469
Fax: 55 11 549 2127
E-mail: unifesp@epm.br

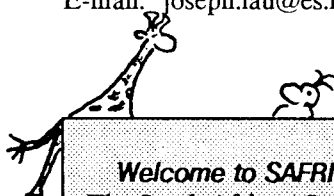
Canadian Cochrane Centre
Health Information Research
Unit
McMaster University Medical
Center
1200 Main Street West
Hamilton Ontario L8N 3Z5
CANADA
Tel: 1 905 525 9140 ext 22311
Fax: 1 905 546 0401
E-mail:
cochrane@fhs.mcmaster.ca

Dutch Cochrane Centre*
Dept of Clinical Epidemiology &
Biostatistics
Academic Medical Center
Meibergdreef 15, J.2-221
Postbus 22700
1100 DE Amsterdam
NETHERLANDS
Tel: 31 20 566 5602
Fax: 31 20 691 2683
E-mail: cochrane@amc.uva.nl

French Cochrane Centre*
Centre Cochrane Français
Centre Leon Berard
28 Rue Laennec
69373 Lyon CEDEX 08
FRANCE
Tel: 33 478 78 28 34
Fax: 33 478 78 28 38
E-mail: ccf@upcl.univ-lyon1.fr

Italian Cochrane Centre
Laboratory of Clinical
Epidemiology
Mario Negri Institute
Via Eritrea 62
20157 Milano
ITALY
Tel: 39 2 39014 540
Fax: 39 2 33200 231
E-mail: cochrane@imimn.vx.irfmm.mnegri.it

New England Cochrane Center
Division of Clinical Care
Research
New England Medical Center
750 Washington Street, Box 63
Boston MA 02111
USA
Tel: 1 617 636 7670
Fax: 1 617 636 8023
E-mail: joseph.lau@es.nemc.org



Welcome to SAFRIC!
The South African Cochrane
Centre is open in Capetown

Nordic Cochrane Centre*
Dept 7112, Rigshospitalet
Tagensvej 18 B
DK-2200 Copenhagen N
DENMARK
Tel: 45 3545 5571
Fax: 45 3545 7007
E-mail: cochrane@inet.uni-c.dk

San Antonio Cochrane Center
Audie L Murphy Memorial
Veterans Hospital
VA ACOS/AC (11C6)
7400 Merton Minter Boulevard
San Antonio Texas 78284
USA
Tel: 1 210 617 5190
Fax: 1 210 617 5234
E-mail:
cochrane@merece.uthscsa.edu

San Francisco Cochrane Center
Institute for Health Policy Studies
University of California
1388 Sutter Street, 11th Floor
San Francisco California 94109
USA
Tel: 1 415 476 1067
Fax: 1 415 476 0705
E-mail: sfcc@sirius.com

South African Cochrane Centre
PO Box 19070
Tygerberg 7505
SOUTH AFRICA
Tel: 27 21 938 0438
Fax: 27 21 938 0342
E-mail: cochrane@eagle.mrc.ac.za

UK Cochrane Centre
Summertown Pavilion
Middle Way
Oxford OX2 7LG
UK
Tel: 44 1865 516 300
Fax: 44 1865 516 311
E-mail: general@cochrane.co.uk

*** Note address or other
contact changes**