

Rapid answers to primary care questions



We helped to create rapid answers to frequently asked questions for primary care clinicians near the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

What we did



Aim

Early on in the COVID-19 pandemic, primary care doctors (general practitioners) and nurses had many questions, such as “do homemade masks prevent the virus spreading?” Experts shared their opinions in the media and there were lots of contrasting views. We wanted to answer clinicians’ questions based on scientific evidence, making the answers relevant to Belgium.



Activity

We worked with medical school students to create clear answers to primary care clinicians’ most frequent questions about COVID-19.

A university collected questions that were relevant to primary care in Belgium. Masters students studying medicine worked in pairs to draft answers in the Dutch language. We checked and validated each of these rapid answers to make sure they were accurate, consistent and evidence-based. We developed criteria to assess each of the answers.



Collaboration

Cochrane Belgium worked with the Academic Centre for General Practice at KU Leuven and their students to create rapid clinical answers.

What we achieved

Within just a few weeks the 23 highest priority questions about COVID-19 for primary care in Belgium were answered, all based on research evidence.

There was a lot of interest in the questions and answers. We wanted to reach as many primary care providers as possible. We published the answers, called BestBETs, on the [Academic Centre for General Practice at KU Leuven's website](#) and in Tijdschrift voor Geneeskunde (the Belgian Journal of Medicine).

The answers were also available on ebpracticenet, the Belgian digital database of reliable evidence-based information for health practitioners.

“Cochrane knows how to harness people’s skills and interests. Medical students were eager to be involved and they helped create quick useful answers for primary healthcare.”

Cochrane Belgium

See more here: <https://www.achg.be/covid-19-01/vraag-en-antwoord>

What we learnt

1

Cochrane has a **wide range of expertise** and is eager to work with people producing and sharing evidence. Cochrane Belgium was able to work together with the medical school to share our experience, develop criteria and review draft clinical answers in a very short timeframe.

2

We were **flexible to adapt to the changing situation**. There was a lack of reliable evidence early on, but now there is increasing good quality research available. We have shifted our focus away from answering simple questions and are now signposting to Cochrane rapid reviews and other high-quality evidence.

3

Many groups including students, consumers and healthcare professionals can get involved with synthesizing research evidence. We found that **medical students wanted to help**. They supported us by spending time producing summaries. We checked their work carefully as and were able to give them feedback that helped the students keep improving the final work.



Learn more

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