



THE NORDIC
COCHRANE CENTRE

Strategic plan

2009 - 2011



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The Cochrane Collaboration

Systematic reviews of research are important for rational decision making in health care and for guiding the planning of new research. The Cochrane Collaboration is named after the epidemiologist Archibald Cochrane who, in 1979, alerted the medical profession to need of organising critical summaries, adapted periodically, of all relevant randomised controlled trials.

The first speciality to which Cochrane's approach was applied was care during pregnancy and childbirth. Several hundred systematic reviews of primary studies were prepared through an international collaborative effort coordinated by Sir Iain Chalmers in Oxford. In 1987, the year before Cochrane died, he suggested that other specialties should copy the methods used. Cochrane reviews from all areas of health care are now published electronically in The Cochrane Library, and, as of 2008, half of the world's population had free access to Cochrane reviews.

Cochrane reviews are indexed in MEDLINE when first versions and major updates of existing reviews are published. In 2008, the impact factor of Cochrane reviews was 4.7, and the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews ranked 14 out of 100 journals in the ISI category Medicine, General & Internal.

Aims and principles

The Cochrane Collaboration is an international, not-for-profit organisation that was launched in October 1993. It aims to help people make well-informed decisions about health care by preparing and maintaining systematic reviews of the effects of health care interventions. The Collaboration's work is based on ten key principles:

- Collaboration, by internally and externally fostering good communications, open decision-making and teamwork.
- Building on the enthusiasm of individuals, by involving and supporting people of different skills and backgrounds.
- Avoiding duplication, by good management and co-ordination to maximise economy of effort.
- Minimising bias, through a variety of approaches such as scientific rigour, ensuring broad participation, and avoiding conflicts of interest.

- Keeping up to date, by a commitment to ensure that Cochrane Reviews are maintained through identification and incorporation of new evidence.
- Striving for relevance, by promoting the assessment of health care interventions using outcomes that matter to people making choices in health care.
- Promoting access, by wide dissemination of the outputs of The Cochrane Collaboration, taking advantage of strategic alliances, and by promoting appropriate prices, content and media to meet the needs of users worldwide.
- Ensuring quality, by being open and responsive to criticism, applying advances in methodology, and developing systems for quality improvement.
- Continuity, by ensuring that responsibility for reviews, editorial processes and key functions is maintained and renewed.
- Enabling wide participation in the work of The Cochrane Collaboration by reducing barriers to contributing and by encouraging diversity.

Collaboration

International collaboration is essential for three main reasons. First, the accumulated evidence about the effects of health care that awaits synthesis in systematic reviews is huge. Second, individuals with the necessary skills and commitment are in short supply. Third, any attempt by institutions or nations to dominate the activities of the Collaboration should be avoided.

The time required to prepare valid reviews is usually grossly underestimated. The key to the success of the Collaboration is therefore to harness the enthusiasm and energy that researchers already devote to keeping up to date in their particular areas of interest, and to provide the support they need to prepare and maintain high-quality systematic reviews.

The Cochrane Collaboration is evolving rapidly and currently engages more than 13,000 people. The challenge of coordinating the Collaboration is therefore substantial and its structures and working arrangements are under continued review.

Cochrane Review Groups

The front line contributors to the Collaboration are the authors. Each author is a member of a Cochrane Review Group, which consists of people sharing an interest in a particular topic, e.g. stroke. Each Review Group is co-ordinated by an editorial team that has similar responsibilities as editors of a print journal. At the beginning of 2009, there are 52 Review Groups, covering all aspects of health care.

Methods Groups

The science of research synthesis evolves rapidly. Thirteen methods groups have been established to develop methodology and advise the Collaboration on how the validity and precision of systematic reviews can be improved. For example, the Statistical Methods Group is assessing ways of handling different kinds of data for statistical synthesis.

Fields

Fourteen fields focus on dimensions of health care that cut across the topics of several review groups, such as the setting of care (e.g. primary care, occupational health) or age group (e.g. child health). People associated with fields search relevant journals for studies, help to ensure that priorities and perspectives in their sphere of interest are reflected in the work of the review groups, compile specialized databases, co-ordinate activities with relevant agencies outside the Collaboration, comment on systematic reviews relating to their particular area and often do reviews themselves.

Consumer Network

The Cochrane Consumer Network provides information and a forum for networking among consumers involved in the Collaboration, and a liaison point for consumer groups around the world.

Cochrane Centres

The work of review groups, methods groups, fields and the Consumer Network is facilitated in a variety of ways by 13 Cochrane Centres around the world. They share responsibility for helping to co-ordinate and support members of the Collaboration in areas such as training, promote the objectives of the Collaboration, and provide special functions, e.g. develop software and assemble the register of controlled trials that currently contains over 400,000 references.

Steering Group

All registered Cochrane entities are eligible to vote in the election of members to the Collaboration's Steering Group, and at its Annual General Meeting. The Steering Group members meet twice a year. In between its two main meetings, the Steering Group's various working groups hold regular meetings by teleconference. Steering Group decisions are guided by goals and objectives set out in the Collaboration's Strategic Plan.

Nordic Cochrane entities

The Nordic Cochrane Centre and Branches

The Nordic Cochrane Centre opened on 13 October 1993. It is the reference Centre for Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden in the Nordic region, and for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Poland, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. There are national branches of the Centre in Finland and Norway and national contact persons in Iceland, Poland and Sweden. The branches perform similar work as the Centre but have less formal obligations. The Centre is responsible for evaluating the work in its branches. The work of the Centre and branches is described in annual reports (available from www.cochrane.dk) and is evaluated by The Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group. The Centre and branches are guided by an advisory board that meets once a year.

The Nordic Cochrane Centre and branches contribute substantially to The Cochrane Collaboration, for example by developing The Cochrane Information Management System, including Review Manager; by convening The Methodology Review Group; by producing Cochrane reviews and methodological research; and by contributing to the Publishing Policy Group (which is responsible for providing advice on the contents of the Collaboration's products and overseeing pricing, distribution and marketing arrangements).

Staff at The Nordic Cochrane Centre

Ahtirschi O, Test and Documentation Officer

Askham FA, Administrator

Cordoba Currea GC, Researcher

Dawood I, System Developer

Gøtzsche PC, Director

Hedegaard J, Centre Secretary

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Nielsen M, PhD Student
Pandal M, Secretary
Rosati P, System Developer
Riis J, Communication and Support Officer
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Staff at The Norwegian Branch

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Movik E, Health Economist
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Staff at The Finnish Branch

Ahovuo–Saloranta A, Researcher
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Mäkelä M, Director
Ilonen T, Secretary
Pasternack I, Administrator

Review Groups

Four of the 52 Review Groups and a satellite of a fifth Review Group are based in one of the Nordic countries (co–ordinating editor in brackets):

- The Cochrane Hepato–Biliary Group (Christian Gluud, Denmark)
- The Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group (Peer Wille–Jørgensen, Denmark)
- The Cochrane Anaesthesia Group (Ann Møller, Denmark)
- The Cochrane Methodology Review Group (Andy Oxman, Norway)
- The Norwegian satellite of the Effective Practice and Organisation of Care Group (Andy Oxman, Norway)

Fields

The Occupational Health Field is based in Finland, and co-ordinated by Jos Verbeek.

Methods Groups

All methods groups but one have Nordic participation.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board for the Nordic Cochrane Centre provides advice and support about the strategic direction for activities within the Centre. The members are appointed on three-year terms, with one possible renewal. Currently, the members are:

Dr Risto P. Roine, Helsinki University Central Hospital (chairman)

Ms Sine Jensen, Danish Consumers' Council (consumer representative)

Mr Henrik Grosen Nielsen, Danish Ministry of Health

Dr Sigurður Helgason, Landlaeknisembaettið, Iceland

Dr Atle Fretheim, Nasjonalt kunnskapssenter for helsetjenesten, Norway

Dr Juliette Säwe, Swedish Council for Technology Assessment in Health Care

Financial support

The Cochrane Collaboration is registered as a charity and it is the responsibility of its contributors to secure their own funding. The staff at The Nordic Cochrane Centre and branches are grateful for the financial support received from our funders and the voluntary help received from many people and institutions since the Centre was founded in 1993 (see annual reports and previous strategic plans). Currently, our funders are:

- Central Library for Medical Sciences, Finland
- Cochrane Collaboration, UK
- Danish Government
- Finnish Medical Journal
- Forskningsrådet for Sundhed og Sygdom
- Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad)
- Norwegian Knowledge Centre for the Health Services
- Nordic Council of Ministers
- Rigshospitalet, Denmark
- Stakes (National R &D Centre for Welfare and Health) /FinOHTA, Finland
- Sygekassernes Helsefond

Acknowledgements

We owe special thanks to the members of the Advisory Board of the Centre and Medical Director Jannik Hilsted, Rigshospitalet, Copenhagen.

Goals

The strategic plan for The Cochrane Collaboration has four goals:

Goal 1: To ensure high quality, Cochrane reviews are available across a broad range of health care topics.

Goal 2: To promote access to Cochrane reviews and the other products of The Cochrane Collaboration.

Goal 3: To ensure an efficient, transparent organisational structure and management system for The Cochrane Collaboration.

Goal 4: To achieve sustainability of The Cochrane Collaboration.

The strategic plan for The Nordic Cochrane Centre reflects the goals of The Cochrane Collaboration and will be described within each of these.

Goal 1. To ensure high quality, Cochrane reviews are available across a broad range of health care topics.

The methods used in preparing and maintaining systematic reviews are under constant development to ensure high quality. Improving quality of reviews, and of the research studies that are summarised in reviews, are major concerns for The Cochrane Collaboration and for The Nordic Cochrane Centre. Furthermore, The Nordic Cochrane Centre is globally responsible for developing and maintaining the Cochrane Information Management System (IMS) on behalf of The Cochrane Collaboration. The system is partly internet-based and consists of software and processes that supports the preparation, maintenance and publication of Cochrane Reviews. More information about software development by The Nordic Cochrane Centre can be found at www.cc-ims.net.

Target 1.1: Continue to improve the Review Manager (RevMan) software by working closely with RevMan Advisory Group and the Information Management Advisory Group.

Target 1.2: Conduct methodological research, contribute to improving the quality and reliability of Cochrane reviews, recruit new researchers, and collaborate with researchers nationally and internationally.

Target 1.3: Prepare and update Cochrane reviews performed by staff members, provide training for authors of Cochrane reviews, and provide support to Cochrane Review Groups and other entities based in the Nordic region, contribute to recruitment of new review authors, and increase regional participation in The Cochrane Collaboration.

Target 1.4: Organise PhD courses of relevance for production of Cochrane reviews and for dissemination of the principles for evidence-based medicine.

Target 1.5: Contribute to ensuring that all results of all trials, and trial protocols, become publicly accessible.

Target 1.6: Co-ordinate the editorial process for protocols and reviews in the Cochrane Methodology Review Group and update the Cochrane Methodology Register (register of articles on research methodology).

Target 1.7: Contribute to relevant working groups, workshops and courses on research methodology, editing, evidence-based medicine, and initiatives for improving the relevance and quality of research (CONSORT for trials, GRADE for grading the evidence, SPIRIT for protocols, STARD for diagnostic tests, STROBE for observational studies, PRISMA for systematic reviews).

Target 1.8: Handsearch general medical journals in the Nordic area for randomised trials, provide English titles and keywords for trials that are not indexed on PubMed, and provide help with translations of research reports written in Nordic languages.

Goal 2. To promote access to Cochrane reviews and the other products of The Cochrane Collaboration

Target 2.1: Ensure continued funding for making The Cochrane Library freely available for all Nordic citizens.

Target 2.2: Provide support to patients and liaise with patient organisations, contribute to making the interface for The Cochrane Library more user-friendly, with better indexing and browsing systems, and update the homepage that helps Nordic citizens use The Cochrane Library.

Target 2.3: Co-ordinate the process of selecting interesting new Cochrane reviews for comments in journals of the Nordic national medical associations (the dissemination project).

Target 2.4: Collaborate with the media to promote awareness and use of Cochrane reviews.

Target 2.5: Contribute to improving the readability and relevance of Cochrane reviews.

Goal 3. To ensure an efficient, transparent organisational structure and management system for The Cochrane Collaboration

Target 3.1: Contribute to effective communication ensuring that key responsibilities and roles are described for all contributors to the Collaboration and are easily searchable.

Target 3.2: Contribute to ensuring that Nordic Cochrane entities adhere to the practices and policies of The Cochrane Collaboration, and that any conflicts of interest are declared for all contributors.

Target 3.3: Contribute to resolving conflicts between individuals and entities.

Target 3.4: Maintain user-friendly web sites for pivotal projects.

Target 3.5: Contribute to ensuring that all decision-making processes and relationships within The Cochrane Collaboration are transparent and explicit.

Target 3.6: By working closely with the IMSG and its advisory groups, continuing to improve the Information Management System, including the internet-based server,

Archie, which consists of a central review database, workflow management tools, systems for preparing modules of information from Cochrane entities, tools for providing Cochrane material to the publisher for publication, and an address database for Cochrane contributors.

Goal 4. To achieve sustainability of The Cochrane Collaboration

Target 4.1: Contribute to ensuring support for the Nordic Cochrane entities.

Target 4.2: Contribute to ensuring that the preparation and maintenance of Cochrane reviews receives full academic recognition.

Target 4.3: Contribute to the development of the Collaboration and its software by sales of licences to software to third parties for commercial use.

Addresses and web sites

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