

Bringing Evidence-based Medicine (EBM) to Swedish Physicians

During the nineties the Swedish Council on Technology Assessment in Health Care (SBU) was the sole provider of evidence-based knowledge to Swedish physicians. Although gaining high credibility for their Health Technology Assessment (HTA) reports the majority of clinicians had only vague ideas concerning the concept of EBM. Inspired by the Danish example of bringing the Cochrane Library to all Danish doctors, SBU approached the Swedish Medical Association with a request for the same service. By late fall 1999 all members could log in to the web-page of the Association (by their membership number) and thereby access the Cochrane Library. We then asked the new Chief Editor of the Swedish Medical Journal, Josef Milerad, to write about Cochrane and EBM.

We were enthusiastically received and in a short while I was appointed Deputy Editor for EBM. A series of papers was drafted and authors asked to contribute. During 2000 we have published 7 papers on different aspects of EBM such as:

- What is a systematic review and why is it so important?
- How to focus on a clinically important question.
- Is this paper worth reading?
- How to critically appraise a paper on treatment.
- Introduction to the Cochrane Collaboration.
- How to search the Cochrane Library and PubMed for evidence-based answers.

During 2001 we will publish papers on, among other issues, surrogate endpoints, class effects, meta-analysis, qualitative research and quality of life studies. All from the perspective of the ordinary physicians' ability to understand and critically read such papers themselves.

Every fourth week we will include these papers and also a more extensive comment on a Cochrane review, an HTA report or a systematic review from journals such as JAMA, BMJ or Lancet. We also have two pages for short descriptions of recent important systematic reviews to give the readers a taste of what EBM could offer to their clinical needs.

Our efforts have been met by an immediate response from many physicians who find that the Journal is now publishing papers of immediate relevance for their clinical work.

*Mats Eliasson MD, PhD, Project Director, SBU
Department of Medicine, Sunderby Hospital, Luleå, Sweden
Mats.Eliasson@nll.se*

The Annual Nordic Cochrane Collaboration Contributors Meeting

And the seminar "The Informed Patient"

The annual open meeting of contributors to the Nordic Cochrane Collaboration will take place from 10:00 to 12:00 at the National Institute of Public Health at Geitmyrsveien 75 in Oslo on 25 January 2001. It will be followed by the seminar "The Informed Patient" from 13:00 to 16:00.

The Norwegian government passed the Patients' Bill of Rights in 1988 and most other Nordic governments have passed similar bills. Central to these bills is the patient's right to information, both about his or her condition and about the nature, possible risks and adverse effects of health care.

What is being done to ensure that this right becomes a reality? We have invited representatives from Nordic governments and from patient organisations to talk about this issue in a half-day seminar. The seminar is open to anyone who is interested, including government and patient representatives, and health professionals.

For information and registration for both events contact:

Ms Bitten Haugan
Health Services Research Unit
National Institute of Public Health
PO Box 4404 Nydalen
0403 Oslo, Norway
Tel. +47 22 04 26 75
Fax. +47 22 04 25 95
E-mail: bitten.haugan@folkehelsa.no

Inside

News from CHBG and CCCG	2
Publication of industry sponsored trials	2
Breast cancer screening review	2
Polish affiliation	3
Collaboration with Finnish HTA	3
BioMed 2 status	3
Software development	3
NRSMG established	4
Core funding achieved	4
Academic recognition of Cochrane reviews	4
Workshops and meetings	4

Cochrane Hepato-Biliary Group (CHBG) Moved to Nordic Cochrane Centre, symposium in Prague

On November 14, 2000, The Editorial Team of the CHBG moved to new premises at The Nordic Cochrane Centre, H:S Rigshospitalet. Though the period was busy we managed to settle down quickly and to proceed with our regular work. The deadlines and tasks on our calendar are many, but the one that attracts particular attention is the CHBG one-day symposium on evidence-based medicine in Prague, Czech Republic, on April 17, 2001. We are greatly honoured that the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL) has acknowledged the necessity of the event and, for the first time, has given the CHBG the possibility to run a whole day symposium for hepatologists. If you have not received the EASL second announcement and call for abstracts, please feel free to require one by contacting the CHBG Editorial Team office.

We will be most happy to see you there!

With warm regards,

The CHBG Editorial Team office

Publication of industry sponsored trials

The Danish Medical Association and the Danish Pharmaceutical Industry Association have signed an agreement on cooperation concerning clinical trials. Importantly, it is specifically mentioned that both parties have the right to publish results of a clinical trial no matter what the results are. Trials that show that a certain treatment is not effective should also be sought published.

Both parties have a right to inspect each other's data. If publication can have consequences for a patent application, a publication strategy must be agreed upon between the parties.

By publication in a journal the drug company must have the possibility of commenting on manuscripts within an agreed time frame without, however, having a decisive influence on the final form of the manuscript.

In my opinion, this agreement is a major step forward although the last sentence above is unfortunate as it does not exclude the possibility of legal proceedings. For example there is currently a case where a US company has filed a claim against a study's lead investigators and their universities asking for US \$ 7-10 million in damages. Under the contract the investigators had a legal right to publish and they refused to include an improper post-hoc subgroup analysis that the company felt was important and demanded that the company handed over the final data. The trial failed to find an effect of an HIV-1 vaccine compared to placebo (Lancet 2000;356:1659).

Peter C. Gøtzsche

News from the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group (CCCG).

Recently an important issue for the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group has been to raise funds to guarantee future activities. This problem is now solved. The Cochrane activities within the Copenhagen area now receive basic funding from the Copenhagen Hospital Corporation. In consequence, the CCCG is able to maintain the activities at the present level. We still have to apply for funding for running costs as well as for the development of specific reviews but the core funding is a big help.

All in all, we are very satisfied with the group's activities. We now have 5 full reviews and 16 protocols in the Cochrane Library, more than half of which will be developed into full reviews within the coming months. The CCCG has 37 titles registered.

We invited our editorial board and other collaborators to join the CCCG status meeting on September 22-23 in Copenhagen. As before, the status meeting was very fruitful. We received a lot of new ideas and positive feedback from the participants. During the coming months the editorial office will turn these ideas into practice - especially the issue of optimising the editorial process.

Ten different papers on evidence based colorectal surgery are in progress right now owing to a guest editorship on a coming issue of "Seminars of Colorectal Surgery". This special issue of the journal is planned for publication during 2001.

For further details about the group, including abstracts from participation in congresses and the Cochrane Colloquium, please read our forthcoming CCCG newsletter. It is planned for publication during December 2000 and will be forwarded to editors, peer reviewers, handsearchers, and other review groups and interested persons (240 persons totally). The newsletter will also appear on our website (www.cccg.dk) in January 2001.

*Peer Wille-Jørgensen
Co-ordinating Editor*

Cochrane review on breast cancer screening

Our Cochrane review on breast cancer screening with mammography was sent to the Cochrane Breast Cancer Group and also to a paper journal in early October. We hope it will be possible to publish it in The Cochrane Library, issue 2, 2001, in April.

Ole Olsen & Peter C. Gøtzsche

Affiliated centre in Poland

We are pleased to announce that the National Centre for Quality Assurance in Health Care (NCQA) which is located in Cracow, Poland, has become affiliated with the Nordic Cochrane Centre. This centre has the main responsibility for hospital accreditation and health technology assessment in Poland. The head of the centre is Prof. Rafal Nizankowski. Our initial contact was Dr Krzysztof Landa, our current contact is Dr Małgorzata Bała. We believe the centre is a natural focus for Cochrane activities in Poland. The centre has already translated the Cochrane brochure into Polish and will also translate the Cochrane glossary. Four people from the centre have participated in our handsearching workshop and systematic reviewing is also on the agenda.

Peter C. Götzsche

Biomed 2 handsearching project

The Biomed 2 project of handsearching specialized health care journals for randomised controlled trials and controlled clinical trials in seven European countries (Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain and the UK) with Carol Lefebvre in the UK as project co-ordinator is about to run to its end. The project was supported by the European Union Biomed 2 Programme.

We will continue handsearching during the months of January and February 2001. Thereafter, we will use the rest of the time to sort out the files and take care that everything has been processed and forwarded to The New England Cochrane Center in due course for the end date of the project, June 2001.

Kirsten Lone Jensen

Handsearch Coordinator, Nordic Cochrane Centre

Cochrane and HTA collaborate in Finland

The Finnish Branch of the Nordic Cochrane Centre (NCC) has relocated within Stakes (The National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health in Finland). We now work within the Finnish Office for Health Care Technology Assessment (FinOHTA). The small staff is providing information about the Cochrane Collaboration and support for reviewers as before. During the past years FinOHTA has been an important source of support for Finnish Cochrane reviewers, and has collaborated in providing training in the methodology of critical appraisal and systematic reviews.

Technology assessment and Cochrane work support each other in a very natural way. In 2001, the Finnish Branch of NCC will again take care of its traditional yearly tasks. These include general information services; handsearching the Finnish medical journals for RCTs, CCTs, and meta-analyses; participation in methodological training; review funding and networking with reviewers. We also have travel grants available for reviewers to facilitate participation in review group meetings and the annual Colloquium.

Helena Varonen, who has been taking care of much of the Cochrane information services, will take up a new job at the Finnish Medical Society, working with guidelines. The Finnish Branch will search for a new coworker to fill her post - which will be difficult indeed! The secretarial support will be taken care of by Ms. Aala Koski at FinOHTA.

Marjukka Mäkelä, MD, PhD, MSc (ClinEpi)

Director of the Finnish Branch of the NCC; Head of FinOHTA

Software development in The Cochrane Collaboration

- how The Nordic Cochrane Centre is involved

The Cochrane Collaboration develops and maintains many of the software systems and tools that form the electronic infrastructure of the Collaboration. The full set of tools is known as the Cochrane Information Management System, and includes Review Manager (RevMan) for developing and maintaining reviews, Module Manager (used by Cochrane entities for submitting reviews and other information for publication), HIREx (for maintaining contact information), the comments and criticisms system, and the Cochrane web site.

Software development in the Cochrane Collaboration is overseen by the Cochrane Information Management System Group (formerly known as The Software Development Group). The Group is an advisory group to the Cochrane Steering Group and is chaired by Monica Fischer from The Nordic Cochrane Centre. It has been decided to change the name of the group to emphasize its involvement in all aspects of the electronic infrastructure - not just software development. The Group has several advisory groups of its own to oversee different components of the Information

Management System, including the RevMan Advisory Group, the ModMan Advisory Group, and the Comments and Criticisms Advisory Group. Considerations are also given as to whether a Contact Management Advisory Group should be established. The Nordic Cochrane Centre is represented in most of these groups.

Besides involvement in the advisory groups, The Nordic Cochrane Centre is directly involved in several software development projects. The Centre has been responsible for development of RevMan since version 3.1 and has taken over further development of ModMan. Recently we have distributed over 2000 copies of RevMan 4.1 on CD-ROM to reviewers and review groups. The project includes supporting the Collaboration in the use of the software. We are currently working on a pilot project for a new, Internet based contact database, which we hope will make the use and maintenance of the Cochrane contact database a lot simpler. An added benefit of the project is to gain experience in Internet based software development to prepare for our proposed future project: a fully integrated, Internet based Information Management System.

Rasmus Moustgaard

Non-randomised Studies Methods Group Established

In its first years of existence, the Cochrane Collaboration published almost exclusively systematic reviews of randomised trials. However, certain problems may be very difficult or even impossible to study in trials, e.g. some public health interventions or rare side effects. Thus, there is a need for systematic reviews of non-randomised studies of the effects of health care interventions.

In order to organise and develop the knowledge in this field and make it accessible to Cochrane reviewers and others, the Cochrane Non-randomised Studies Methods Group was registered in November 1999. The group is lead by Ole Olsen, associate director of the Nordic Cochrane Centre, and is financially supported by The Danish Institute for Health Technology Assessment for 3 years.

Workshops were held at the Cochrane Colloquia in Rome, 1999, and Cape Town, 2000. An open symposium was held in Copenhagen in June 2000. Working meetings are held twice a year.

The group is currently developing guidelines for inclusion of non-randomised studies in Cochrane reviews. Members of the group have carried out several empirical studies to underpin the guidelines. The following guideline chapters are under development:

1. Introduction
2. What types of study designs should be included in Cochrane reviews?
3. Searching for non-randomised studies
4. Quality assessment
5. Data extraction
6. Analysis
7. Interpretation

The draft chapters are made available on the Internet for information and possible comment as they reach a useable form; so far, chapters 1, 2 and 3 have been posted. Chapters, proceedings, minutes and other information are available at the group's home page, www.cochrane.dk/nrsmg/

Ole Olsen

Academic Recognition of Cochrane Reviews

Impact factor as BMJ at major hospital in Denmark

Research at one of the major hospitals in Denmark, Rigshospitalet, is partly evaluated by the use of journal impact factors. As Cochrane reviews are not yet indexed by Science Citation Index, it has been agreed that they will receive the same impact factor as articles in the British Medical Journal. Substantial updates of Cochrane reviews involving new trials will be regarded as new articles. The justification for this is two-fold. Firstly, large cancer trials are often published several times, with varying lengths of follow-up. Secondly, systematic reviews in the paper literature may also be published several times, for example, the Early Breast Cancer Trialists' Collaborative Group published an individual patient data review of the effect of radiotherapy in the New England Journal of Medicine in 1995 and again, with longer follow-up, in The Lancet in 2000.

Peter C. Gøtzsche

- How do I become involved in The Cochrane Collaboration?
- See our homepage: www.cochrane.dk

Core funding achieved for The Nordic Cochrane Centre

The Nordic Cochrane Centre, which opened in 1993, is on the budget of the Copenhagen Hospital Corporation from 2001. Needless to say, this core funding has tremendous importance as it allows us to start more long-term planning and to realise a number of important activities which have been dormant because of insufficient funding. The Copenhagen Hospital Corporation has also generously provided basic funding for the three Nordic Review Groups which are based in Copenhagen.

Peter C. Gøtzsche

Workshops & meetings in 2001

Date	Venue	Event
25 January	Oslo	Annual Meeting
26 March <small>NEW DATE!</small>	Copenhagen	Handsearching workshop
27 March <small>NEW DATE!</small>	Copenhagen	Protocol workshop
28 March <small>NEW DATE!</small>	Copenhagen	RevMan workshop
28 May - 1 June	Oslo	How to practice Evidence Based Health Care
June (date not final)	Copenhagen	Kursus i evidensbaseret klinik
3 September	Copenhagen	Handsearching workshop
4 September	Copenhagen	Protocol workshop
5 September	Copenhagen	RevMan workshop
On demand	Copenhagen and Oslo	Individual sessions on writing protocols/reviews and using RevMan