

In this issue:

New Cochrane Review Group in Occupational Health Care?	1
Cochrane Reviews performed by staff members	1
Dissemination of results of Cochrane Reviews	2
Improving the quality of Cochrane Reviews: I	2
Improving the quality of Cochrane Reviews: II	2
EBM in Sweden - publishing, teaching and implementing	2
Cochrane Library available for Finnish doctors	3
The Cochrane Library Users' group	3
Handsearching for randomised clinical trials	3
A Central Contacts database: improving the electronic infrastructure	3
Reference to Cochrane Reviews in Instructions to Authors	4
News from the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group (CCCG)	4
Workshops in 2002	4

New Cochrane Review group in Occupational Health Care?

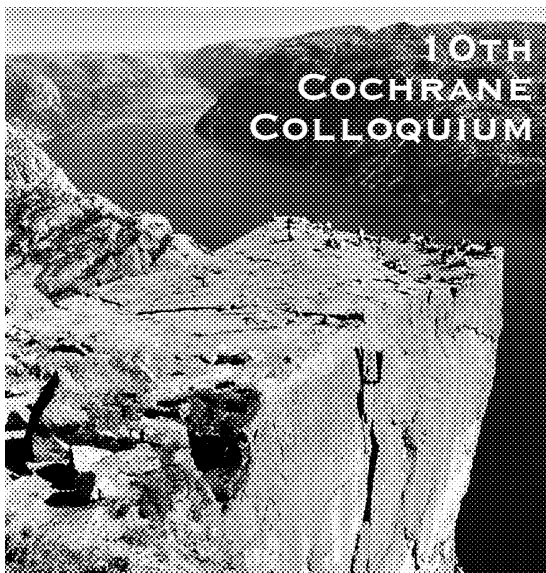
The occupational health care system in Finland accounts for most of the primary health care of the working force, and companies are obliged by law to arrange preventive occupational health care for all of their employees. Occupational health care deviates from primary health care by having connections to work related issues like toxicology, ergonomics and social psychology. In recent years, there has been increasing interest in creating an Occupational Health Care Cochrane Group. In November 2001, members of the Finnish Cochrane branch and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH) discussed current research activities and needs, and the possibility of organising a new Cochrane Group as a part of the FIOH. There are many questions in occupational health that cannot be studied within randomised trials but the best available evidence could be included in Cochrane Reviews. A point to note is that the main occupational health care journals have not been handsearched. We are planning to arrange a pre-exploratory meeting to investigate the possibility of creating a new Occupational Health Care Cochrane Group, maybe already at the Colloquium in Stavanger this year.

Iris Pasternack

Cochrane Reviews performed by staff members

The Nordic Cochrane Centre has published important research during 2001. In addition to the quality project mentioned below, a systematic review questioning the existence of a worthwhile placebo effect and a systematic review questioning the benefit of mammography screening were published in the New England Journal of Medicine (2001;344:1594-602) and in The Lancet (2001;358:1340-2 and webpage), respectively. The screening review was published simultaneously in the Cochrane Library (2001, issue 4), and the placebo review is expected to be published in 2002 in the Cochrane Library. Both articles made frontpage news in the New York Times. In a subsequent article in the New York Times Magazine (Dec 9, 2001), evidence-based medicine was described as having been elected as one of the 80 ideas that 'shook the world' in 2001, and two of the three examples alluded to were the two systematic reviews published by the Nordic Cochrane Centre.

Peter C. Gøtzsche



STAVANGER, NORWAY

31ST JULY -

3RD AUGUST 2002

(WWW.COCHRANE.NO)

Dissemination of results of Cochrane Reviews

Since 1996, The Nordic Cochrane Centre has selected reviews from each new issue of the Cochrane Library for possible comment in general medical journals written by content area specialists. This collaboration started with *Ugeskrift for Læger* and was subsequently extended to the other Nordic medical associations' journals and to the *British Medical Journal*. A survey in one of the journals showed that these commentaries on Cochrane Reviews were rated to be the most worthwhile and popular category of articles. At the Centre Directors' meeting in Brazil in February 2001 it was decided to expand this activity to all centres and that the Nordic Cochrane Centre should coordinate it. Voluntary centre staff select some of the new reviews and assess whether they appear to be valid and well-written. It proved to be difficult to recruit volunteers, however, and it was therefore decided at the Colloquium in Lyon in October 2001 to involve only the Australasian and the Iberoamerican centres, in addition to the Nordic centre.

Julie Pildal

Improving the quality of Cochrane Reviews: I

The Nordic Cochrane Centre held a 3-day workshop on Cochrane editing in Copenhagen in Sept 2001. This was the first workshop of its kind and 29 of the existing 50 Cochrane review groups were represented; many of the participants were review group co-ordinators or editors. The participants appreciated the workshop. A follow-up 3 months later demonstrated that many of the items reported by the participants at the workshop to be implemented, had in fact been accomplished. This initiative is expected to lead to improvements in the quality of Cochrane Reviews, and we will repeat the workshop in Copenhagen in 2002.

Peter C. Gøtzsche

Back in old offices

The visiting address of The Nordic Cochrane Centre in Copenhagen is again **Tagensvej 18B**.



Improving the quality of Cochrane Reviews: II

The quality of the 53 new Cochrane Reviews published in issue 4 of the Cochrane Library 1998 was assessed by 10 methodologists affiliated with the Cochrane Collaboration. The reviews were assessed by 2 people in a semi-structured way. The Nordic Cochrane Centre initiated and coordinated the project. Major problems were identified in 15 reviews (29%). The evidence did not fully support the conclusion in 9 reviews (17%); the problematic conclusions all gave too favourable a picture of the experimental intervention. Thus, although Cochrane Reviews are performed according to a strict methodology and have been shown to be of better quality and less biased than systematic reviews published in paper journals, there is still room for improvement. It is important for users of the Cochrane Library to be aware that they should interpret reviews cautiously, particularly those with conclusions favouring experimental interventions. This project was published in the *British Medical Journal* (2001;323:829-32).

Peter C. Gøtzsche

EBM in Sweden – publishing, teaching and implementing

During 2001, the Swedish Medical Journal (*Läkartidningen*) has continued its series of papers on evidence-based medicine (EBM), for which I am Deputy Editor. Eleven Cochrane Reviews have been extensively reported and critically commented upon. We have also had comments on meta-analyses published in major journals, and all reports from the Swedish Agency for Health Technology Assessment (SBU) have been scrutinised and discussed in the Journal. A dozen papers on methodological aspects were also published. Among them were:

How to critically read and use papers on qualitative research

The pathway from graded evidence to national guidelines

Bayesian thinking in studies of treatment and diagnosis

How to read an observational study

EBM is necessary but not enough. Needs additional input in areas with weak scientific basis.

Coming up are papers on class effects, surrogate outcomes, the concept of risk from the viewpoint of patients (written by a social anthropologist) and EBM from a scientific-historical perspective.

SBU is increasingly using Cochrane Reviews as a basis for parts of their reports. All project groups are taught how to use the Cochrane Library. SBU has also created a network for clinicians teaching EBM, and groups are being formed on teaching medical students, researchers, residents, interns and specialists. At the Medical School of Umeå, EBM is now a part of the core curriculum and is being introduced with a one-week course already during the first term. Therefore, we are starting courses in EBM specifically aimed at clinical teachers and other lecturers at this medical school with a special focus on pedagogic techniques and implementation.

Mats Eliasson

Cochrane Library available for Finnish doctors

Cochrane Reviews are now available for practically all Finnish doctors and many other health care professionals. The Finnish Medical Society (Duodecim) pioneered evidence-based medicine by publishing an electronic version of a clinical guidelines database for general practitioners already in 1989. In 2001, Duodecim introduced an internet portal, Terveystori ("Health Gate"), which provides, among other useful information and links, access to the Cochrane Library. The very popular guidelines database (now called EBM Guidelines) is also included, with links to relevant Cochrane Reviews. All hospitals, all medical doctors, and most primary care units in Finland are licensed "Health Gate" users.

Iris Pasternack

The Cochrane Library Users' Group

The Cochrane Library Users' Group (CLUG) provides a forum for discussion of issues related to the use of the Cochrane Library, particularly as concerns its usability, readability, searchability and format. It is also used to share news related to the Cochrane Library, for example when changes in software occur, or new information is added.

It is hoped that in time the list will act as a forum for those who have used the Cochrane Library to inform practice, to share with others information on how this has been achieved, or what barriers were met in particular cases.

CLUG will not be for discussion of issues related to particular systematic reviews or their methodologies, or for other feedback on individual items on the library, apart from their use in informing practice in health care settings.

The main forum for discussion is an e-mail discussion list, but the CLUG web pages aim to complement those discussions by providing information on events, and a web based record of other related information. See www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/clug.htm for instructions for how to join the CLUG.

Monica Fischer

Handsearching for randomised clinical trials

The Nordic Cochrane Centre participated in a handsearching project supported by the European Union from 1998 to 2001 together with the other six European Cochrane Centres, located in France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom. The Nordic Cochrane Centre was the most active contributor next to the UK Cochrane Centre and we identified 7257 trial reports in the European specialist journals we handsearched.

Kirsten Lone Jensen

A Central Contacts database: Improving the electronic infrastructure

Since 1996, The Nordic Cochrane Centre has overseen the development of the entire Information Management System in the Cochrane Collaboration as one of its core contributions to the collaboration, as well as producing key elements of the system, such as the Review Manager software. In 2001, the Centre started to develop an online central contacts database. Collaborating with the Norwegian branch in the early stages, a working prototype was launched in the autumn of 2001. The prototype has been running as a pilot project to gain experience and evaluate its feasibility. In December, the Centre proposed to the Information Management System Group that the system be formally accepted as the basis for the future central management of contact details in the Collaboration. The proposal was accepted, and will hopefully get Steering Group approval in 2002. The aim is to have implemented the database fully by late 2002, providing all Cochrane entities with easy access to updated contact details for all members. Future perspectives include the merging of the contact database with any other online systems developed as part of the next generation of the Information Management System.

Jacob Riis

Reference to Cochrane Reviews in Instructions to Authors

The 2002 revision of Instructions to Authors in *Ugeskrift for Læger* (Journal of the Danish Medical Association) contains important information in relation to Cochrane Reviews which I have extracted below (my translation):

State of the art articles

If a relevant Cochrane Review exists, an assessment of it should be included in the article. State of the art articles may be written on the basis of the Cochrane Collaboration's current meta-analyses and will then be labelled 'Evidence-based Medicine'. These state of the art articles are often commissioned; they are prepared by a content area specialist. An abstract of the relevant Cochrane review will be printed together with the article.

Review articles

A review article is a systematic, critical review of the available literature in the area. Review articles must therefore contain a Methods section that describes the search strategy; for example which search terms and databases were used. Criteria used for inclusion and exclusion of identified articles must be stated. If a relevant Cochrane Review exists, an assessment of it must be included in the article.

Original articles

We have adopted the Consort group's criteria, with regard to the publication of randomised trials. Methods of randomisation should be described in detail. Discussion section: If a relevant Cochrane Review exists, an assessment of it must be included in the article.

Ugeskrift for Læger has set an example with these recommendations which I hope other journals will follow.

Peter C. Gøtzsche

Workshops in 2002

Date	Venue	Event
22 April	Copenhagen	Protocol workshop
23 April	Copenhagen	RevMan workshop
3-4 June & 17-18 June	Copenhagen	Kursus i evidensbaseret klinik
12-14 Sept.	Copenhagen	Workshop on Cochrane Editing
7 October	Copenhagen	Protocol workshop
8 October	Copenhagen	RevMan workshop

- details at www.cochrane.dk

News from the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group (CCCG)

The Danish Institute for Health Technology Assessment prolonged their support for the Review Group Coordinator salary till 2003, and the Copenhagen Hospital Corporation allocated core funding till 2004. This allows periodic employment of reviewers for short periods, but we will continue to apply for grants for specific projects.

During 2001, we published 7 new reviews, making a total of 12, and have 14 approved protocols and registered 11 new titles. We have promoted our work at several international conferences and have contacted international societies. In March 2002, a special issue of "Seminars in Colon and Rectal Surgery" will be published, with the CCCG acting as editor for 13 papers on evidence based colorectal surgery which are all written by CCCG editors and other collaborators. We regard this as a breakthrough in the "Paper-world".

During the summer of 2001, CCCG was allocated new office facilities in a separate building together with the Cochrane Anaesthesia Group.

The editorial process is not yet optimal. We will discuss this issue at a meeting in April; all persons with an interest in CCCG are welcome. Our handsearch activities have been "hibernating"; our trials search coordinator for 4 years, Finn Kallehave, has left Copenhagen for further education. He will still be in close contact with us, but we take this opportunity to thank Finn for the tremendous job he has done in retrieving more than 9000 relevant papers for our specialised register. We hope to be able to initiate our retagging project and will hire a part-time trials search coordinator in the spring of 2002.

We often find very comprehensive systematic reviews in paper journals performed in the Cochrane way and with the use of the RevMan software which have not been registered as upcoming Cochrane Reviews. This is both good and bad. Good because it disseminates the idea of high-quality systematic reviews; bad because there is no possibility for updating. We hope the improved acceptance of duplicate publications in journals and the Cochrane Library can help turn these reviews into Cochrane Reviews.

We are now starting to face the challenge of getting our reviews updated. One of our goals for 2002 is to further develop internal guidelines for this process.

Henning Keinke Andersen