

Nordic Cochrane News

Newsletter for the Nordic Cochrane Centre (NCC)



Issue 7, December 2002



Front cover illustration by Marian Pandal, NCC

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All-Russia EBM Society

The Russian branch of the NCC initiated the creation of the All-Russia Society of EBM specialists. This society is now represented by groups of enthusiasts in 12 regions of Russia. Most of them located in medical schools.

In 2002 the first Russian edition of Clinical Evidence was published and it adds a lot to the input of evidence into the healthcare.

This year the Soro foundation gave a small grant to the Russian branch of the NCC for methodological support of activities of Russian medical professional bodies in the development of guidelines for medical practice.

In 2002 two programs funded by the EU were initiated in Russia, both directed to transformation of healthcare delivery to 'family practice' type, and both armed by the idea of EBM.

In early December in Visegrad, Hungary, the workshop on teaching EBM took place, where participants from Eastern and Central Europe were lectured by Cochrane Collaborators.

Vasily Vlassov, Director of the Russian Branch

The next generation of Cochrane software

Since the Cochrane Collaboration was established in 1993, several tools and systems have been developed to help facilitate the electronic production and publication of Cochrane reviews and other material. These tools and systems make up the Cochrane Information Management System (IMS). As of December 2002, the IMS covers the review writing software (RevMan), the software used to compile information from review groups for publication in the Cochrane Library (ModMan), and web-based contact management software (the Cochrane Contact Database). The latter also allows centres, fields and methods groups to submit their information for publication under 'Information about the Cochrane Collaboration' in the Cochrane Library.

For several years there has been a desire to revamp the various sub-systems of the IMS, so that they are better integrated with each other and thereby help to avoid duplication of effort (e.g. by requiring the same data, such as contact details, being entered into several systems) and making the production of Cochrane reviews more efficient. To help develop plans for a new and more effective IMS, a Collaboration-wide software needs assessment survey was carried out in 2001. The results of this survey were presented to the Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group (CCSG) in April 2002, and subsequently the IT team at the Nordic Cochrane Centre was asked to implement the following recommendations from the survey:

- The Cochrane Collaboration should develop an im-

proved central system for the management of people's contact details.

- The components of the Information Management System should be made more interlinked so that information in different components can be automatically shared among these parts.
- The components of the Information Management System should allow users to work in existing, popular software as much as possible (e.g. for word-processing, reference management and statistical analysis).
- The Cochrane Collaboration should continue to develop and support the tools for compiling and submitting the modules (including reviews) of CRGs and the descriptions of activity of other Cochrane entities.
- The Cochrane Collaboration should consider how best to support the need for systems to track reviews within review groups.
- The Cochrane Collaboration should develop and encourage the development of systems for handling contact information that are based on clearly defined standards for exchange of information; rather than supporting all the systems for managing contact information, which are used locally within Cochrane entities.

In addition, it was also recommended that the Cochrane Collaboration should develop a study-based register, which should be integrated with the IMS. However, the CCSG asked for this to be assigned a low priority for the time being.

Together with the IT staff at the Norwegian Branch of the NCC, the Centre has set up a team, whose remit is to work on the design of a new Internet-based IMS.

The Information Management System Group has approved a preliminary proposal, and a worked up proposal for the new IMS will be presented to the Steering Group for approval at their meeting in April 2003. A dedicated web-site will be set up to share plans for the new IMS, and an announcement about this will be posted to CCINFO, when the web-site is available. If you wish further details, please contact Monica Kjeldstrøm (mk@cochrane.dk), director of the Cochrane Information Management System.

Monica Kjeldstrøm, NCC

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The content of your message should simply be: **subscribe**

News from the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group (CCCG)

In November 2002 the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group had 58 registered titles, out of which 13 are full reviews, and 20 are approved protocols published in the Cochrane Li-

brary. The updating of published reviews is now an issue and another great challenge for the CRG, which is on schedule for most of the reviews involved. The current CCGG policy is that each review appears in the Cochrane Library for two years before updating. If a review becomes out-of-date in an important way, the co-ordinating editor decides the overall action.

In May 2002 Lisbeth Mathiesen, M.Sci. in geology, was employed as the new CCGG Trials Search Coordinator substituting Finn Kallehave. Lisbeth was formerly employed at the Danish National Medical Library. Lisbeth's main areas of responsibility are to help CCGG reviewers with their searches, to help maintaining the CCGG specialised register, which now includes 9345 references, and to follow-up on the hand search activities of our group.

From May to August, 2002 we have had the pleasure of housing senior registrar Lene Kirkeby, Dept. K, Bispebjerg Hospital as an in-house reviewer, developing her review "Postoperative adjuvant chemotherapy for radically operated Dukes C rectal cancer". The protocol was published with the latest module and will appear in *Clib* 2003, issue 1.

Another colleague from Dept. K, Jørn Pachler, will be joining us in the editorial office from December 2002 for 3 months plus 2 months later, developing a review on quality of life after surgery for rectal cancer.

The 10th Cochrane Colloquium was held in Stavanger, Norway and lasted four compact days in July/August. TSC Lisbeth Mathiesen and RGC Henning Keinke Andersen represented the Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group. The Colloquium always offers a good chance to meet colleagues for informal talks – getting loose ends tightened and establishing new contacts, as was also the case in Norway.

During 2002 we have had the pleasure of registering 4 new titles on Chinese herbal medicine – this is a new approach, and we look forward to helping the Chinese reviewers develop these titles into Cochrane reviews.

The CCGG participated in the 2002 Tripartite Colorectal Meeting in Melbourne, Australia and we were very pleased to learn that the general knowledge of the Cochrane Collaboration is rapidly expanding, and the questions being asked on our exhibition stand were much more focused than ever before. We are confident that promotion activities of this kind facilitate recruitment of reviewers.

The Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group

The Nordic Cochrane Centre and alternative medicine

Over the next three years the Nordic Cochrane Centre and the Danish Knowledge & Research Centre for Alternative

Medicine plan to cooperate on providing reliable information on the effects and side effects of alternative interventions.

The Danish Knowledge & Research Centre for Alternative Medicine is an independent institution organized under the Danish Ministry of Health. Its aim is to explore complementary and alternative therapies, to promote research in this area and to assist the dialogue between healthcare providers, complementary and alternative therapists and healthcare consumers.

The cooperation with the Nordic Cochrane Centre will mainly consist in three yearly methodological workshops, a number of stipends for Cochrane reviews on alternative interventions, practical assistance and methodological guidance for such reviews, and support for public access to the Cochrane Library.

Ashjorn Hróbjartsson, NCC

Free access to the Cochrane Library

Several countries have provided free access to the Cochrane Library for all of its citizens: UK, Ireland, Norway, Finland and Australia. We hope that free access will also be provided in Denmark, beginning in 2003. The hospital owners (Amtsrådsforeningen), the Danish National Library Authority and the Danish Knowledge and Research Centre for Alternative Medicine have generously provided most of the necessary funds. We have asked the Ministry for support and are awaiting their response.

We are currently working on a homepage in Danish that hopefully will help patients and other consumers use the Cochrane Library effectively.

Peter C. Gøtzsche, NCC

Collaboration with the Danish Consumer Council

Last year we started to collaborate with the Danish Consumer Council that now has a major interest in healthcare. This collaboration is expected to be of mutual benefit. For example, consumers can help focus on adverse effects. It is very much needed to get adverse effects better reported, e.g. it has been shown in several studies that only 5% of serious adverse effects of drugs leading to hospital admission are notified by doctors to drug agencies. Furthermore, the way adverse effects are collected in randomised trials is far from ideal. Drug firms require so many forms to be filled in and so much detail that many adverse effects do not get reported because of clinicians' lack of time. Better reporting of adverse effects would benefit consumers, as it would be easier to describe fully the balance between benefits and harms of interventions in Cochrane reviews.

The Consumer Council and the Nordic Cochrane Centre are planning a one-day symposium (in Danish) in October 2003

focusing on information to patients. The symposium will coincide with the ten-year anniversary of the Nordic Cochrane Centre.

Peter C. Gøtzsche, NCC

Meeting on evidence-based medicine in Helsinki 23rd Jan 2003

The 11th Advisory Board Meeting of the Nordic Cochrane Centre (NCC) will be held in Helsinki on 24th January 2003. There will be an afternoon meeting on the 23rd, with focus on evidence-based clinical work. The themes are:

Placebo effect. The placebo has an established role in the randomised trial, and clinicians sometimes use placebo effects in daily practice. There can be ethical problems in both cases. Recent systematic approaches to the placebo effect will be presented and discussed (1,2).

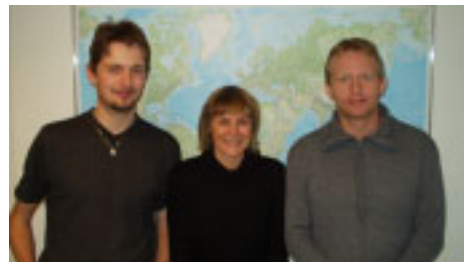
Evidence-Based Medicine Guidelines. In Finland, Evidence-Based Medicine Guidelines help general practitioners manage important diseases and diseases with wide practice variation (3). The guidelines produce good general solutions to health problems and can promote local integrated care pathways, which are important tools to provide good and cost-effective healthcare. The evidence in the guidelines is based on systematic reviews of the literature and it is graded after quality. The evidence is the key to critical appraisal of one's own practice (4). The Finnish doctors have access to EBMG in mobile phones, on an Internet portal or on CD-ROMs where they are updated regularly (5).

Ten years of the Nordic Cochrane Centre. The Nordic Cochrane Centre has been working for ten years and remarkable milestones have been reached. The head of the centre, Peter Gøtzsche, will present some highlights and targets from the strategic plan for the coming years.

1. Hróbjartsson A, Gøtzsche P. Is the placebo powerless? *N Engl J Med* 2001;344:1594–602.
2. Puustinen R, Louhiala P. Onko plasebo lumetta? *Duodecim Teema: Lääketieteellisen tutkimuksen etiikka* 2002;118:729-32
3. Karma P, Mäkelä M. Käypä hoito käyntiin. *Duodecim* 1997;113:9
4. Kaila M, Korppi M. Mitä on näyttöön perustuva lääketiede? *Suom Lääkäril* 2002;44:4467–71.
5. Kunnamo I. Internet ja tietokannat terveystieteiden arjessa. *Duodecim* 1999;115:447-50.

Ari Lindqvist, Advisory Board, NCC

New staff at the NCC



Robert Bialek, System Developer, Marian Pandal, Administrator
Asbjørn Hróbjartsson, Senior Researcher

Workshops 2003

Date	Venue	Event
28 April	Copenhagen	Protocol workshop
29 April	Copenhagen	RevMan workshop
7 October	Copenhagen	Protocol workshop
8 October	Copenhagen	RevMan workshop

Details on www.cochrane.dk

How to become involved in the Cochrane Collaboration?
See www.cochrane.dk

New telephone number at NCC: +45 3545 7112



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