

Why get involved?

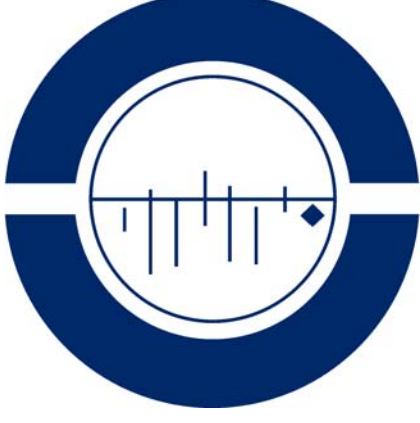
- Many people become involved in our work because they want to answer the question: is a treatment effective? We provide the training, resources and support to help produce the answer, and to make this answer available worldwide.
- Others become involved because they want to give something back: people who want to help others; healthcare practitioners and researchers who feel that they can contribute to the process of expanding medical knowledge; or perhaps individuals with some time to offer.
- There are many roles you can play, including:
 - Helping the authors who prepare and maintain Cochrane reviews;
 - Searching medical journals and other literature to find relevant research (we maintain the world's largest register of randomised trials, the raw material for most of our reviews);
 - Refereeing the Collaboration's output, part of the process of ensuring that Cochrane reviews are of very high quality;
 - Providing methodological support, developing the tools and techniques needed to keep us at the cutting edge of this discipline;
 - Helping to prepare a Cochrane review – usually as one of a team, and with the support of the Collaboration's worldwide network.

Want to know more?

Read the Newcomers' Guide (www.cochrane.org/docs/newcomersguide.htm); then contact your nearest Cochrane Centre (www.cochrane.org/contact), or The Cochrane Collaboration Secretariat: Tel +44 (0)1865 310138; Fax +44 (0)1865 316023; E-mail secretariat@cochrane.org.

The Cochrane Library

You don't have to help prepare Cochrane reviews to want to make sure that your treatment is evidence-based. Visit *The Cochrane Library* (www.thecochranelibrary.com) to see Cochrane reviews of the effectiveness of thousands of healthcare interventions. Abstracts and summaries of reviews can be viewed online at no cost. In some countries access to the full reviews is free, thanks to national licences. Elsewhere it is subscription-based, or pay-per-view. *The Cochrane Library* is published by John Wiley & Sons Ltd (www3.interscience.wiley.com).



**THE COCHRANE
COLLABORATION®**

**Providing up to date evidence
of the effects of health care**

*Our vision is that healthcare decision-making
around the world will be informed by high quality,
timely research evidence, and that
The Cochrane Collaboration will play a pivotal role
in the production and dissemination of this evidence
across all areas of health care*

An introduction

Who are we?

- The Cochrane Collaboration, established in 1993, is an internationally renowned initiative dedicated to improving health care for the world's population. Over 11,000 people contribute to our work, in more than 90 countries.
- We are an international not-for-profit organisation, established as a company limited by guarantee, and registered as a charity.
- An elected board of trustees sets policy for the Collaboration on behalf of its members.

What do we do?

- We help healthcare providers, policy-makers, patients, their advocates and carers to make well-informed decisions about health care by preparing, maintaining and promoting the accessibility of Cochrane reviews of the effects of healthcare interventions.
- Cochrane reviews bring together research on the effects of health care, and are considered the gold standard for determining the effectiveness of different interventions.
- We are the world's leading producers of up-to-date systematic healthcare reviews.
- Cochrane reviews are published online in *The Cochrane Library*.

What's different about Cochrane reviews?

Many people produce systematic reviews. Nobody produces as many as The Cochrane Collaboration, across such a wide range of healthcare topics, with such rigorous research methods. What makes Cochrane reviews different is that they are updated regularly, as new information becomes available, ensuring that treatment decisions can be based on the most up-to-date and reliable evidence.

Why are Cochrane reviews so important?

The Cochrane Collaboration logo demonstrates why Cochrane reviews matter - how one review saved tens of thousands of babies' lives, and how delay in assessing health care can cost lives. It illustrates the results (shown by the diamond) of a systematic review of the findings of randomised trials - the horizontal lines - comparing one treatment with a placebo.

This systematic review evaluated the effectiveness of a short, inexpensive course of a corticosteroid given to women at risk of giving birth too early. The first trial was reported in 1972, and another seven were reported by 1981. The logo summarises the evidence that would have been revealed had all these trials been reviewed systematically. It indicates strongly that the drug reduces the risk by 30 to 50 per cent of babies dying from the complications of immaturity.

No systematic review of these trials was published until 1989, so most obstetricians were unaware that the treatment was so effective. As a result, probably tens of thousands of premature babies suffered, or needed more expensive treatment, or even died. Replicating this effect across the thousands of reviews we produce, it is clear why the evidence produced by The Cochrane Collaboration is vital to global health.

Other examples (from www.nelh.nhs.uk/cochrane_gems/):

Scopolamine helps make the journey less sickening

Although the journey is sometimes more fun than the arrival, it isn't if you suffer from motion sickness. Anyone who has experienced motion sickness may have had the following symptoms: nausea, vomiting, headache, sweating and, for some, dread of making a journey. Many interventions - drug based, behavioural and complementary - have been tried as ways to alleviate motion sickness. One of the most common is scopolamine and a Cochrane review published in *The Cochrane Library* brought together the worldwide research on this drug. The authors of the review concluded that scopolamine is effective in preventing motion sickness. They also highlighted, though, that more research is needed into how well the drug compares to alternative ways of making the journey more bearable for people who suffer from motion sickness.

Antibiotics and fractures

The use of antibiotics following open fractures is almost routine in high-income countries. A Cochrane review published in *The Cochrane Library* brought together the strong evidence for this and suggested that wider use should be made of antibiotics for fractures.