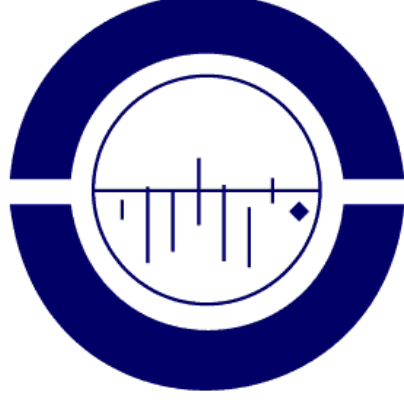


Want to know more?

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*

The structure

Structure of The Cochrane Collaboration

The Cochrane Collaboration assesses most areas of health care. To do this, it is divided into Collaborative Review Groups, each of which concentrates on a specific health care area; Fields, that draw together health care issues impacting on many CRGs (such as cancer and vaccines); a Consumer Network, that represents the interests of health care consumers; Methods Groups develop methodological techniques; Centres with geographic and linguistic responsibilities; and a Steering Group, which provides the policy and decision making body of the Collaboration, and this, in turn, is supported by the Secretariat.

Collaborative Review Groups

The main work of The Cochrane Collaboration is done by fifty Collaborative Review Groups, within which Cochrane Reviews are prepared and maintained. The members of these groups – researchers, healthcare professionals, people using the health care services (consumers), and others – have come together because they share an interest in generating reliable, up-to-date evidence relevant to the prevention, treatment and rehabilitation of particular health problems or groups of problems.

To become part of The Cochrane Collaboration, each Collaborative Review Group is required to prepare a plan outlining how it will contribute to the Collaboration's objectives. This describes who will have responsibility for planning, co-ordinating, and mentoring the Group's work (a co-ordinating editor supported by an editorial team). It also describes how the Group will identify and assemble in a specialized register as high a proportion as possible of all the studies relevant to its declared scope; and who, drawing on the studies in this register, will take responsibility for preparing and maintaining which reviews. Every Group appoints an individual to organise and manage the day-to-day activities of the Group – a review group co-ordinator.

Methods Groups

The science of research synthesis is still relatively young and evolving rapidly. 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, and the Applicability and Recommendations Methods Group is exploring important questions about drawing conclusions regarding implications for practice, based on the results of reviews.

Fields

Fields focus on dimensions of health care other than health problems, such as the setting of care (e.g. primary care), the type of consumer (e.g. children), or the type of intervention (e.g. vaccines). People associated with Fields search specialise sources for relevant studies, help to ensure that priorities and perspectives in their sphere of interest are reflected in the work of Collaborative Review Groups, compile specialized databases, co-ordinate activities with relevant agencies outside the Collaboration, and comment on systematic reviews relating to their particular area.

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.

Centres

The work of Collaborative Review Groups, Methods Groups, Fields, and the Consumer Network is facilitated in a variety of ways by the work of a dozen Cochrane Centres around the world (Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, South Africa, Spain, UK, and the USA). They share responsibility for helping to co-ordinate and support members of the Collaboration in areas such as training, and they promote the objectives of the Collaboration at national level. Each Centre is responsible for a number of different countries in the world, and some Centres have branches within those countries.

Steering Group

All Collaborative Review Groups, Methods Groups, Fields, the Consumer Network, and Centres are eligible to vote in the election of members to the Collaboration's Steering Group. The Steering Group meets twice a year, once during the annual Cochrane Colloquia and on one other occasion. 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 (<http://www.cochrane.org/admin/stratplan.htm>).

Secretariat

The Steering Group and its several working groups are supported by a secretariat, currently based in the UK.