

Summary Notes
CENTRAL/CCTR Advisory Group (CCAG) Meeting
1999 Cochrane Colloquium
Rome, Italy
7 October 1999, 7 am

Present: Mike Clarke (MC), Kay Dickersin (KD), Jeannette Downing-Park (JDP), Cindy Farquhar (CF), Diane Haughton (DH), Monica Kundan (MK), Carol Lefebvre (CL), Eric Manheimer (EM), Indy Rutks (IR), Mark Starr (MS), Joanne Telenta (JT)

Not Present: Mark Lodge

1. Discussion of the CCSG meeting of 6 October 1999

- CF summarized discussions at the Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group (CCSG) meeting regarding the future publication of CENTRAL. CF reported that the CCSG decided in favor of the CCAG's recommendation generated during the 6 October 1999 CCAG meeting. The CCAG recommendation is reproduced as Item 5 in the 6 October 1999 CCAG meeting Summary Notes, and has been added as a second annex to the Cochrane Collaboration's Special Agreement with Update Software. The stipulations of the recommendation are to be implemented for three years henceforth.
- Andy Oxman, Chair of the CCSG and convenor of the Publishing Policy Group (PPG), noted after the CCSG meeting that future discussions between KD and additional potential publishers of CENTRAL/CCTR could continue as long as any final proposal developed is ratified by the PPG. MS indicated by E-mail his agreement that PPG maintains responsibility for granting permission to publish CENTRAL (E-mail from MS to KD et al 2 November 1999).

2. Discussion of action items from previous teleconference of 14 April 1999

- In Item 3 of the 14 April 1999 CCAG meeting Summary Notes it was recorded that "CCAG members will promote educational material, such as *Quick Guides*, produced by the CCAG, and encourage their constituencies to submit specialized registers and handsearch results in a format that adheres to the instructions in the *Quick Guides*." At the 7 October 1999 meeting, discussion focused on methods for disseminating these educational materials. It was agreed that the educational material produced by CCAG would be 'signposted' on the *Signposts* document, uploaded to the TSCs' FTP site, and uploaded to the NECC@P website. It was suggested that all documents useful to TSCs should be available through the NECC@P website. MC suggested that the *Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook*, Section 5 (*Locating and Selecting Studies*) be included among these documents. In addition, all chapters of the CENTRAL Management Plan and information about access to the Master List should be included.

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- It was noted that Update Software had not yet prepared a chapter for the CENTRAL Management Plan describing the work they perform in the management of CENTRAL. MS noted that this chapter would be prepared after NECC@P and Update staff had agreed on their respective roles in the management of CENTRAL. These roles were to be decided at a future meeting among KD, JDP, MK, EM and MS.
- MC reported that the health-related trials from SPECTR (Social, Psychological, and Educational Controlled Trials Register) have been submitted to CENTRAL (action item 5 from 14 April meeting). KD expressed concern that many citations in SPECTR do not meet the Cochrane RCT/CCT eligibility criteria as described in Appendix 5.b.1 of the Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook. The Cochrane definition encompasses randomized, quasi-randomized, and possibly randomized trials. MC and CL agreed that SPECTR records may not be eligible for CCTR, but countered that the records were eligible for CENTRAL, as CENTRAL is defined as containing records for studies which use designs appropriate for some Cochrane Reviews but which are neither randomized or quasi-randomized studies. They suggested that SPECTR be considered as a specialized register submission, and pointed out that specialized registers are eligible for CENTRAL even if they contain citations which are neither RCTs or CCTs. It was also pointed out, however, that if SPECTR were considered a handsearch result, citations to non-trials would not be allowed; handsearch results are processed not only for CENTRAL, but also for the MEDLINE Retagging Project. It was agreed that this was a one-time exception to the usual submission rules.
- In the Summary Notes for the 14 April 1999 CCAG meeting, Item 4, it was recorded that "For the past two or three years, per the agreement and advice of the Trial Registers Development Group, handsearch results received by the BCC [Baltimore Cochrane Center] were directly posted to the BCC FTP site before checking, processing, or quality control. Update has not processed these records, and thus there is a large backlog of search results that had been submitted to the BCC but have not yet been loaded on *The Cochrane Library*." There was discussion at both the 20 April 1999 meeting, and this meeting, of a need to determine which files submitted to the BCC in the past have been loaded onto CENTRAL and which had not. Although Update still has copies of handsearch results submitted in the past, these files were not required to adhere to any format and thus are heterogeneous and difficult to process.

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Action:

- Update Software will check to see which files were submitted. Update will see which, if any, can be processed and will notify CRGs. CRGs and others who submitted files unable to be processed will be asked to resubmit previously submitted files. Update will let NECC@P know which files need to be resubmitted within one year.
- JT will make an announcement at the next RGC/TSC meeting, 9 October, and with IR and JDP send a subsequent note, requesting TSCs to resubmit previously submitted handsearch files by 15 January, 2000. The request will be framed as an option, not a requirement. The TSCs will also be asked to adhere to the guidelines and specifications described in the *Guide for Submission of Handsearch Results to CENTRAL/CCTR* in preparing the resubmitted files, and in preparing all handsearch results submitted in the future.

3. Discussion of action items from previous teleconference of 20 April 1999

- In the Summary Notes for the 20 April 1999 CCAG meeting, Item 3, Action Item 3, it was recorded "NB by MC post-meeting: The National Library of Medicine (NLM) needs to clarify whether they are willing to include and index conference abstracts in the Ancillary Database." This action item was briefly referred to during the meeting and it was decided that it would be discussed at a future meeting instead. (NB by EM post-meeting: The NLM's plan for an Ancillary Database is on hold indefinitely.)

4. Comments on the *Guide for Submission of Handsearch Results to CENTRAL*

Agreed:

- It will be made clear at the start of the document that the *Guide* is to be used only for submission of handsearch records not already included in specialized registers, and for submission of records for MEDLINE retagging.
- The procedures for preparing and submitting MEDLINE-indexed records and non-MEDLINE-indexed records will be summarized, in separate sections, at the start of the *Guide*.
- The status of the proposed NLM Ancillary Database was discussed in reference to its mention in the *Guide*. It was noted that non-MEDLINE citations submitted as handsearch results would not necessarily be assigned indexing terms by NLM staff as part of their inclusion in a proposed NLM Ancillary Database. Therefore it was

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recommended and agreed that any assertion in the Guide that records submitted as handsearch results would be assigned indexing terms by NLM should be removed. MC noted that the Ancillary Database had been a “selling point” for him and he would not support the requirement that TSCs type abstracts of non-MEDLINE citations and submit front pages of reports if the submitted citations were not to be indexed by NLM for an Ancillary Database. (NB by EM post-meeting: As mentioned above, the Ancillary Database is on hold indefinitely. All references to the Ancillary Database in the *Guide* were removed prior to the *Guide*'s dissemination to the TSCs for review. In addition, the typing of abstracts of non-MEDLINE citations and submission of hard copies of reports was changed from required to optional in the *Guide*.)

- The word “*Quick*” will be removed from the title of the *Guide*.
- TSC volunteers will be solicited for initial review of the *Guide*. [NB by EM: The draft *Guide* was distributed to the TSCs' E-mail Discussion List at the same time it was distributed to the TSC volunteer reviewers per request from several TSCs for the need for immediate availability of some guidance for preparing handsearch results.]

Action:

- EM will make all changes recommended above to the *Guide for Submission of Handsearch Results to CENTRAL*
- JT will coordinate solicitation of comments on the *Guide* from TSC reviewers.

5. Comments on *Searching CENTRAL* section of CENTRAL Management Plan

Issues:

- CL's section of the CENTRAL Management Plan, *Searching CENTRAL*, will be edited to increase its comprehensiveness and modify its format (e.g., a bulleted style, reduced use of jargon). The document should be useful and understandable to TSCs, reviewers, and other users of CENTRAL.

Action:

- CL agreed to amend *Searching CENTRAL* as requested. [NB by EM post-meeting: CL revised this section (*Searching CENTRAL*: Draft 30 March 2000) and resubmitted to EM via E-mail 31 March 2000. CL's section draws on material from, and references,

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the Self-training Guide for *The Cochrane Library* 2000 Issue 1, produced, and updated four times a year, by staff at UK National Health Service Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) in York and available from the CRD website (www.york.ac.uk/inst/crd/cochlib.htm). In addition, CL's document provides information specific to the needs of Cochrane Review Groups in developing and maintaining their specialized registers. CCAG members agreed that this was preferred format and content for *Searching CENTRAL*, so as to prevent duplication of effort with the York CRD Chapter, and maintain currency.