

Summary Notes
CENTRAL/CCTR Advisory Group (CCAG) Meeting
1999 Cochrane Colloquium
Rome, Italy
8 October 1999, 5-8 pm

Present: Mike Clarke (MC), Kay Dickersin (KD), Jeannette Downing-Park (JDP), Carol Lefebvre (CL), Eric Manheimer (EM), Indy Rutks (IR)

1. Discussion of MC's section of the CENTRAL Management Plan: *Coding of Records in CENTRAL as CCTR and Correction of Records in CENTRAL/CCTR (Coding of Records)*

Issues:

- It was recognized that there is a need for *Coding of Records* to contain a more formal description of the reason for two registers (i.e., CENTRAL and CCTR) and the differences between the two.
- There is a need for specific and precise procedures for the correction of errors in CENTRAL, both for records submitted as handsearch results, and records included within specialized registers. Procedures for notifying NLM of errors in MEDLINE citations is also needed for MEDLINE-included citations uploaded into CENTRAL.
- It was agreed that an order of precedence would need to be established such that in instances when a record can be imported from more than one source (e.g., from MEDLINE and a specialized register), the order of precedence would determine the version of the record to include in CENTRAL. Also, any error corrections would need to be made to the highest priority source in order for the correction to take effect. The order of precedence list should be included in the *Coding of Records* section in the CENTRAL Management Plan.
- A description of the methods for removing duplicates should be clarified, and include description of notification procedures and correction procedures.

Action:

- MC will make it clear in the section that the “grandfathering” in of records is temporary until resources are available for institution of proper quality control procedures.
- The introduction of *Coding of Records* will be expanded to include a subsection describing the two registers, CENTRAL and CCTR, and explaining the need for both.

Summary Notes

CCAG Meeting 8 October 1999 (cont'd)

- The procedures for correcting/removing errors would differ depending on the error's source.
- Errors may be typographical, incorrect citation information, or inclusion of citations not meeting the CCTR definition in CCTR.
- Records are uploaded to CENTRAL according to a specified order of precedence. Therefore, error records would need to be corrected on the highest precedence source in order for the corrected record to be uploaded into CENTRAL. MS sent to EM an E-mail (26 Nov 99) describing the order of precedence: "We are processing records in the following order: MEDLINE, EMBASE, and CRG Registers, and Handsearch results. The implication of this is that MEDLINE records are taken in preference to EMBASE and EMBASE to registers and handsearch." This information about the order of precedence will be added to the *Coding of Records* section of the CENTRAL Management Plan so that the end-user will have additional information regarding the appropriate person/place to report an error to allow correction by the appropriate source.
- For CENTRAL records with a MEDLINE source, as indicated by the 8 digit unique identifier in the CENTRAL 'AN' field, NLM staff would need to be notified of any errors and make necessary corrections and/or deletions. CL or EM would supply any necessary documentation from NLM for MEDLINE error reporting to include in *Coding of Records*.
- Cochrane Review Group RGCs/TSCs are responsible for correction of errors in their specialized registers of which they have been notified. Since each submission of a specialized register to CENTRAL replaces the register previously submitted, when a record is removed from or corrected in a specialized register, it is also removed from or corrected in the CENTRAL register.
- For records from specialized registers, as indicated by the SR Code supplied to the record in the CENTRAL 'CC' field, the suspected error should be reported to the relevant Review Group TSC, and NECC@P staff should be copied on these communications.
- For records from handsearching, errors should be reported to the NECC@P staff.

Summary Notes

CCAG Meeting 8 October 1999 (cont'd)

- The removal/correction of the individual CENTRAL records originating from handsearch of journals not indexed in MEDLINE would need to be agreed by at least two people, preferably one from NECC@P and one from UKCC. This decision on removal should be based on a reading of the record's corresponding full report.
- Descriptions of notification procedures for errors in CENTRAL citations will be added to *Coding of Records*, and Update Software will add appropriate error reporting instructions to *The Cochrane Library's* Comments and Criticisms facility.
- Duplicates are found by either MS/Update or by others, such as end-users.
- MS will develop a method for filtering out duplicates from CENTRAL, based on the same order of precedence as for editing errors.
- NECC@P staff will compile all duplicates of which they are notified by end users of CENTRAL. This list of duplicates may be used in the future to determine whether Update's duplicate detection filters are sufficiently sensitive.
- CL will investigate whether UKCC staff should perform a dump of all EMBASE records indexed as RCT to CENTRAL. CL estimated that such a dump would not be advisable as these records were not expected to contain a high enough proportion of Cochrane eligible trials.

2. Discussion of timeline for peer review of CENTRAL Management Plan sections: CL's *Searching CENTRAL*, and EM's *Guide for Submission of Handsearch Results to CENTRAL/CCTR*

Agreed/Action:

- CL will redraft *Searching CENTRAL* (see CCAG summary minutes 7 October 1999 for suggested revisions and timeline) and resubmit the revised version of the document to the CCAG E-mail Discussion List by November 1999, for a three week CCAG review.
- EM will send the *Guide for Submission of Handsearch Results to CENTRAL* to volunteer TSCs by the end of October 1999 for a two-week review period. The TSCs comments will be incorporated, and a redraft will be sent to all RGCs/TSCs for a 4-week review period. (NB by EM post-meeting: Volunteer reviewers' comments have been received, but have not yet been incorporated into a redraft.)

3. Discussion of record identification number/source field(s) to include in CENTRAL

Issue:

- Several bibliographic database publishers have signed contracts with Update Software authorizing the download of records from their databases into CENTRAL, including publishers of the following: MEDLINE, EMBASE, Chinese MEDLINE, JICST-E, and the Australasian Medical Index. Each of these databases uses a unique identifier (UI) numbering system. Group members discussed how these UIs should be displayed in CENTRAL. A critical issue concerned whether it is preferable to have a separate designated field in CENTRAL for storage of UIs from each of these sources (i.e., a separate CENTRAL field for the EMBASE UI, the JICST-E UI etc), or whether all UIs should be stored together in a single field in CENTRAL.

Agreed:

- MEDLINE UIs should continue to be stored in the CENTRAL 'AN:' field, and no other identifiers or further information should be stored in this field.
- All records downloaded from bibliographic databases would be displayed in the following format: [database name ID number], e.g., [EMBASE 12345678]
- It was left undecided whether to include all non-MEDLINE UIs in a single field or to store them each in a separate field. However, it was agreed that if these numbers were all stored in separate fields, the empty fields would not be displayed to the end-user. Also, it was recognized that if these numbers were stored together in a single field, they should be separated by a diacritical mark such as a semi-colon, to facilitate the parsing of this field should it become necessary or desirable in the future.

Action:

- CL was charged with drafting a list of source fields which could be used should UIs from each source be stored in separate fields (e.g., MEDLINE, EMBASE).
- MS needs to clarify how the system of labeling source would work if CENTRAL is rebuilt each time.

4. Discussion of Steve McDonald's proposal for a Master List of Databases

Issue:

- Steve McDonald has proposed the creation of a Master List of Databases that would include current information about which electronic databases have already been searched by Cochrane Groups with records transferred to CENTRAL (with the permission of the database publishers), which are currently being searched, and the status of all searches (e.g., years registered, years completed). Such a resource would avoid unnecessary duplication of effort, save resources, and enable TSCs to better plan their searching activities. Only full Cochrane searches (i.e., systematic searches for all RCTs, not limited to those specific to a Review Group's scope), either completed or prospective, would be registered on such a database.

Action:

- CL will develop an initial list of bibliographic databases including those that have already been searched, and those that should be prioritized for future searching.
- Steve McDonald should be notified that the CCAG agreed with his idea in concept, and CCAG members are determining the workload.

5. Discussion of protocol for Master List Update Mailing: 1999

Issues:

- Each year since 1996, a Master List Update Mailing has been sent to all registered searchers. The purpose of the mailing has been to seek updated information regarding journals being searched, years completed, and contact information for the handsearchers. To simplify and improve the annual Master List update process, the following action will be taken: remove individuals listed in the database who have no searches registered, discontinue contact with individuals who have registered only "completed" searches, and focus on contact with the TSCs/RGCs rather than individual handsearchers, to make the process more efficient.

Summary Notes
CCAG Meeting 8 October 1999 (cont'd)

Agreed/Action:

- For this year's mailing, NECC@P will send a letter and Response Form to individuals whose names are listed on the Master List, but who have neither a "completed search" nor a "current search" registered to determine whether they are currently searching any journal, or have in the past searched any journal. If they confirm that they are not conducting searches, and have never searched in the past, their names will be removed from the Master List and they will not be contacted again. [If they do not respond, their name also will be removed.]
- In 1998, the Master List Update Mailing was sent to all those registered on the Master List, including those with only "completed searches" registered on the list. Searchers with only "completed searches" registered on the List, and who have already informed us in their response to the 1998 Master List Update Mailing that these registered "completed searches" are correct, will not be re-contacted for this year's mailing. Searchers/search coordinators with only "completed" searches registered *will* be contacted this year if they did not respond to the 1998 Master List Update Mailing. In future years, the Update Mailings will not be sent to individuals with only "completed searches" registered on the Master List.
- By the year 2000, TSCs/RGCs, and not individual handsearchers, will be the NECC@P's contact persons for all correspondence regarding handsearches registered on the Master List. To accomplish this transfer of responsibility, the NECC@P will first ascertain the associated Review Group for all handsearchers registered on the Master List with "current searches." After the handsearcher's associated Group has been ascertained, NECC@P staff will mail the handsearchers a Master List Update Mailing packet, informing the handsearcher that, upon NECC@P receipt of his/her completed Response Form, staff will replace the handsearcher's name with the name of the relevant TSC/RGC name as the Master List contact person. The 1999 mailing will be the last time that NECC@P will ask the handsearcher to confirm or correct the information on the Master List. Finally TSCs/RGCs will be sent the search information. By confirming the search information, we will ensure that the TSC/RGC taking over the coordination of the search in the future will have the most accurate and current information. What will happen to non-respondents?

6. Discussion of prospective registration of trials

Issues:

- It was unknown which Cochrane entity maintains responsibility for prospective registration of trials

Action:

- KD will discuss with Andy Oxman which Cochrane entity is responsible for prospective registration of trials.

7. Discussion of copyright issues for records in CENTRAL

Issue:

- Neither the Cochrane Collaboration nor Update Software has been granted permission to include some records in CENTRAL (e.g., PsychLit records), and, in fact, copyright statements have been included in records published in CENTRAL.

Agreed:

- Review Groups should be made aware of copyright issues, and if they retain copyrighted records in their specialized registers, only those records for which they have obtained permission to publish should be submitted to CENTRAL.

Action:

- CL will draft the appropriate guidance to include in the next revision of the *Guide for Submission of Specialized Registers to CENTRAL*.
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