

MINUTES OF THE TSC's MEETING at the RGC/TSC MEETING
9.00am – 4.00pm TUESDAY 9th OCTOBER 2001
PALAIS DES CONGRES, LYON FRANCE

PRESENT:

Jo Abbott	Developmental, Psychosocial & Learning Problems Group
Alison Beamond	Epilepsy Group
Sally Bell-Sayer	Wounds Group
Sylvia Bickley	Oral Health Group/Pain Palliative Care & Supportive Care Group
Karen Blackall	Airways Group
Mandy Bryant	Cystic Fibrosis Group
Margaret Burke	Heart Group
Kathie Clark	Canadian Cochrane Network & Centre
Finola Delamere	Skin Group
Liz Dooley	Ear Nose & Throat Diseases Group
Sandrine Dury	Renal Group
Mark Fenton	Schizophrenia Group
Cynthia Fraser	Effective Practice & Organisation of Care Group
Iris Gordon	Upper Gastrointestinal & Pancreatic Diseases Group
Lynn Hampson	Pregnancy & Childbirth Group
Emma Irvin	Back Group
Carol Lefebvre	UK Cochrane Centre
Mark Lodge	Cancer Network
Anne Lusher	Fertility Regulation Group
Eric Manheimer	New England Cochrane Center at Providence
Heather Maxwell	Peripheral Vascular Diseases Group
Steve McDonald	Australasian Cochrane Centre
Hugh McGuire	CCOAN
Ruth Mitchell	Renal Group
Anne Oestmann	Gynaecological Cancer Group
Elizabeth Pienaar	South African Cochrane Centre
Vanna Pistotti	Italian Cochrane Centre
Fiona Renton	Injuries Group
Rene Robb	Infectious Diseases Group
Anupa Shah	Eyes and Vision Group
Judy Stoelwinder	Consumers & Communication Group
Brenda Thomas	Stroke Group
Simona Vecchi	Drugs & Alcohol Group
Sheila Wallace	Incontinence Group
Libby Weir	Breast Cancer Group
Susan Wieland	New England Cochrane Center at Providence
Ruth Withers	Menstrual Disorders & Subfertility Group

APOLOGIES:

Lesley Gillespie	Musculoskeletal Injuries Group
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MEETING COMMENCED at 10.45am

ITEM 1.

The role of Centre TSCs and Review Group TSCs

Discussion Questions:

1 a. *What is the role of a TSC in a Review Group, and how does this differ from the role of a TSC in a Centre? How do other Centre TSCs manage their role?*

1 b. *What is the role of a Field TSC and how can they assist Review Group TSCs?*

(Presented by Kathie Clark, Co-Director, Canadian Cochrane Centre, Hamilton, Ontario)

1 a. A UK document on this issue is available (Carole Lefebvre, UK Cochrane Centre).

In general the CRG TSC role is to support reviewers, while the Centre TSC role is to support the CRGs and TSCs in their region. Both are involved in searching databases and journals.

Steve McDonald (Australasian Cochrane Centre) suggested that one of the core roles of Centre TSCs was to organise handsearching of general medical journals for their region, plus searching of any local databases.

The question was raised as to whether training was part of their role. Steve McDonald thought that would depend on the experience of individuals.

Kathie Clark (Canadian Cochrane Centre) said previous person in the role had been the CCC's information specialist.

Elizabeth Pienaar (South African Cochrane Centre) assists reviewers, as there are no local CRGs.

1 b. Mark Lodge (Cancer Network) spoke on the role of Field TSCs – depending on the terrain covered by the Field, this could include identifying trials for your Field, promoting Cochrane, and finding funds. For the Cancer Network, Mark also acts as a clearinghouse for people wishing to become involved e.g. as reviewers – he can put them in touch with the appropriate CRG in his Field. He has also initiated handsearching of local and non-English language journals. He has also prepared a register of all cancer trials based on the various cancer CRGs registers.

ITEM 2.

Should non-randomised trials go in our Specialised Registers? Should we submit an extra field for all trials submitted for systematic reviews and publish this information on the Cochrane Library?

Discussion Question:

Some TSCs are under the impression that they should ensure that studies identified in reviews (either as included or excluded studies) are entered into their Specialised Registers and ultimately submitted for inclusion into CENTRAL/CCTR. The reason being that studies other than RCTs/CCTs (for example case studies, cohort studies and retrospective studies) have been identified in some reviews. We need clarification on whether these studies should in fact be submitted at the risk of compromising the quality of CENTRAL/CCTR.

(Presented by Sylvia Bickley, TSC Oral Health Group, Manchester, UK)

Carol Lefebvre said that included studies should be in your Specialised Register, but not necessarily excluded studies.

There was considerable discussion on this point, with the following points raised:

- Coding should be used to distinguish between RCTs/CCTs and other studies so that a clean CENTRAL/CCTR can be developed.
- A clear definition of an “excluded study” needs to be developed. **ACTION: Steve McDonald to ask QAG**
- There is a need to feedback to Update Software that not all studies already in CENTRAL/CCTR are RCTs/CCTs – there are many reviews, meta-analyses etc.
- In general the whole point about what should be included in CENTRAL/CCTR needs clarification. **ACTION: Eric Manheimer to feedback to TSCs.**

ITEM 3.

Guidance on searching the LILACS Database.

Discussion Question:

Looking to hear from anyone searching this database who could impart some tips on using the database effectively. To include navigating around the database and building and saving search strategies. It would be helpful to hear from someone who uses it regularly.

Carol Lefebvre said that the Brazilian Cochrane Centre is currently searching LILACS, but the results have not yet been submitted to CENTRAL. (There are copyright issues currently being negotiated). It was suggested TSCs could contact the Brazilian Cochrane Centre who have a search strategy available to use in both Spanish and Portuguese.

ITEM 4

Copyright Issues

Discussion Question:

An increasing number of records are appearing in CENTRAL/CCTR with copyright statements or symbols attached. How do we know which of these have been placed with the publishers’ permission? Should these records have been submitted only as a citation in Specialised Registers?

Presented by Sylvia Bickley (TSC Oral Health Group, Manchester, UK)

Eric Manheimer referred TSCs to the new Copyright statement in the CENTRAL Management Plan on the New England Centre website.

The question was asked whether scanning of papers was permitted e.g. to send copies to reviewers or translators by email. Carol Lefebvre said that the best approach was for CRGs to abide by the copyright regulations in their own country.

ITEM 5.

Entering references found on the Internet into our Specialised Registers.

Discussion Question:

We need guidance about entering records found on the Internet. Without a consensus of agreement there is a very real possibility of a multitude of formats being used in the Cochrane Library for abstracts identified on the web. (The formatting of our records is based on the guidance provided for formatting references in Review Manager. Are there plans to update this?)

Submitted by Lesley Gillespie (TSC Musculoskeletal Group, Dunedin, New Zealand)

There was much discussion around this issue, and the following points were raised:

- To put in the Internet address as the source.
- To use RevMan, however the example given in RevMan is not necessarily clear enough.

- It should be feedback to the RevMan Advisory Group that a clear example should be developed. **ACTION: Heather Maxwell to raise with the RAG**
- The TSCs should advise the RevMan Advisory Group as to how they think it should look.
- Need to ensure that the fields used match Update Software's requirements.

ITEM 6.

TSC Beginners Guide.

Discussion Question:

What is the reaction from new TSCs (i.e. in a post for less than 12 months) about the usefulness of the Beginners Guide? Do they have any ideas or suggestions for amendments?

Presented by Dymphna Hermans (TSC Dementia and Cognitive Impairment Group, Oxford, UK and Liz Dooley (TSC Ear, Nose and Throat Disorders Group, Oxford, UK).

Discussion took place about how it is made known to new TSCs, as at present there is no formal method of ensuring that they here about it and receive it.

Carol Lefebvre suggested that perhaps the New England Cochrane Centre could take on this role, and that Groups should notify the NECC when a new TSC is appointed.

Any suggestions for changes or additions should be sent to Liz or Dymphna for inclusion in the next edition.

ITEM 7.

The reporting of the search for studies in reviews (abstract and text).

Also: **The consistency of the references in the references section of reviews.**

Discussion Question:

As the TSC representative on the Quality Action Group I have been looking through the new reviews in the Cochrane Library Issue 3 2001 with reference to the above two agenda items. The main findings of this exercise are highlighted in the attachment sent by Steve McDonald – please bring a copy to the meeting. Some common problems are outlined, and there is a focus on a few issues where clearer guidance is probably needed.

Presented by Steve McDonald (Information Specialist and Research Fellow, Australasian Cochrane Centre, Monash, Australia)

Search for Studies

Steve McDonald's investigation showed that some groups put in the Medline and/or Embase strategies with a note that it/they were appropriately modified for other databases. Some put in the full strategy for each database used, and others put in only the search terms used, with no indication as to the actual strategy. Some groups are not always internally consistent in how they do this. It was felt that it was not clear in the guidelines for reviewers as to what was mandatory and what was a guideline, and that this area needed to be tightened up.

Three possibilities were put forward:

1. The search strategy for each database searched should be included.
2. The strategy for CCTR or Medline only should be given, with a note that it was appropriately adapted for other databases.
3. No search strategies should be included.

Discussion of these alternatives centred mainly around two issues:

1. The need for transparency, so that readers of reviews could see exactly how the included/excluded studies had been located.
2. The need not to overwhelm readers of reviews with many pages of strategies that they may not be interested in (especially when they wish print off a review).

A vote was taken by show of hands for each of the three alternatives, and the majority vote was for 2. "That the strategy for CCTR or Medline only be given, with a note that it was appropriately adapted for other databases."

In the interests of transparency, it was suggested that either an online link be made to the full search strategies for other databases so that interested readers could view them, or the strategies be included in an additional table within the review. **ACTION: Steve McDonald to report this discussion to the Quality Advisory Group.**

References

There was considerable discussion about what role the TSC should play in editing the references list of a review to ensure accuracy and consistency. An informal vote by show of hands revealed that approximately a third had no role in editing, and a couple of people commented that they were definitely not expected to contribute in any way to the editing process for their Group. The remaining two thirds did have some role, but the extent was not clear. A couple of people indicated that they did check the references for each review before it was published. It was commented that TSCs certainly had the skills to take on this role, and that it would help the quality of reviews if they did so.

Steve McDonald's study also showed that the format of journal titles was inconsistent, in that some reviews used the abbreviated form and some the full form, while others used both in the same review. It was agreed that the full form was preferred, however this is a big task to change on RevMan as no global change is possible.

The conclusions for this item were:

- A copy-editing checklist is needed for the information and formatting required for reporting of search strategies, and for references, to ensure their format and consistency.
- Clarity is needed between suggested style/formats and mandatory ones.
- Resources should be compiled on the styles/formats applicable
- Re the search strategy versus search terms in reviews: the consensus was that the full search strategy should be listed for the major database searched, with a note stating this has been adapted for other databases
- The possibility should be investigated of having an online link to the full strategies for other databases.
- The full journal name should be used in all references, thus ensuring consistency both between and within reviews. Help from Update Software will be needed if retrospective changes to journal names are to be made in Central.

ITEM 8.

Using Inside from the British Library

Discussion Question:

How does one access BLInside? Has this service been useful to TSCs – what do they use it for?

Two people responded, both commenting they had not had much success. It is supposed to give access to the contents of conference proceedings held by the British Library, however they had found it difficult and time-consuming to search for little result.

Carol Lefebvre suggested that perhaps a training session could be organised for UK TSCs, and that feedback could then be given to other TSCs. Everyone should have received their passwords by now, but any who hadn't should email Carol after the Conference.

ITEM 9.

Missing information from Cochrane Review Coversheets relating to trial identification.

Discussion Question:

I noticed when beta-testing the new generation "The Cochrane Library" that a considerable number of reviews have the text 'Information not supplied by reviewer' against a number of important headings on the coversheet. (In the new generation this information is currently in red, making it all the more noticeable!). I asked Update Software to provide some data on this, so we could see how widespread it was, and whether additional discussion and guidance were required. Many of the headings do not fall within the remit of TSCs, but it seemed to me that those below might do.

The following figures are taken from the reviews submitted by the CRGs at the end of August 2001 for inclusion in Issue 4 of The Cochrane Library.

Number of Reviews = 1,235

Reviews with an empty "Date new studies sought but none found" = 1,086

Reviews with an empty "Date new studies sought but not yet included/excluded" = 1,167

Reviews with an empty "Date new studies sought and included/excluded" = 1,082

If TSCs do hold some of this information they could help improve the quality of reviews by trying to ensure completeness. I understand that this is the responsibility of each editorial team to ensure that the entire content of their reviews is as accurate as possible.

Secondly, it seemed to me that the wording of the questions was perhaps not quite correct i.e. the categories might not be mutually exclusive, which is what I understand they are expected to be. (Perhaps that is why you are not filling them in!)

Presented by Carol Lefebvre (Information Specialist, UK Cochrane Centre, Oxford, UK.)

It was pointed out that only one of these fields was mandatory. It was suggested that the other fields therefore be mandatory (but as the mandatory field was already being left unfilled in the majority of reviews, this would not necessarily solve the problem!). Another suggestion was that optional fields simply not be shown if they are empty.

It was felt that the current fields are ambiguous, so TSCs/RGCs should work out a more meaningful definition for the fields, and feedback to the RevMan Group via Heather Maxwell.

ACTION: Mark Lodge agreed to work on this issue.

ITEM 10.

Any Other Business

10 a. Finola Delamere (Skin Group) asked what was the current situation in regards to obtaining help with translations of articles from non-English language journals.

Vanna Pistotti (Italian Cochrane Centre) replied that the Italian Cochrane Centre, which had been officially co-ordinating translations, was no longer able to fill this role because of the difficulties involved.

There was some discussion on how individual CRGs managed – some use university students, others have “contacts”, but would be unwilling to share names with other Groups in case they were swamped. It seemed that finding suitable translators was difficult and often prohibitively expensive. One person recommended asking reviewers from the appropriate countries to translate the abstracts, and it could then be decided if a full translation was warranted.

10 b. Carol Lefebvre suggested that TSCs were not yet adequately represented on the ModMan Advisory Group, although they are playing an increasing role in the module composition and submission. As the membership of that group is currently being reviewed, it seems a timely opportunity for a TSC representative to become a member. She suggested that anyone interested contact Sonja Henderson

10 c. Sylvia Bickley (Oral Health Group) said that on the latest issue of The Cochrane Library, many of the references tagged “New” in CENTRAL/CCTR were also on the last issue. It was agreed that this should be fed back to Update Software, as it is their responsibility to add the tags.

MEETING CLOSED at 2.30PM