

Mission Statement

The Cochrane Collaboration is an international, non-profit organization that aims to help people make well informed decisions about healthcare by preparing, maintaining, and promoting the accessibility of systematic reviews of the effects of healthcare interventions.

Principles

The Cochrane Collaboration's work is based on ten key principles.

- *Collaboration*, by internally and externally fostering good communications, open decision-making and teamwork.
- *Building on the enthusiasm of individuals*, by involving and supporting people of different skills and backgrounds.
- *Avoiding duplication*, by good management and coordination to maximize economy of effort.
- *Minimizing bias*, through a variety of approaches such as scientific rigor, ensuring broad participation, and avoiding conflicts of interest.
- *Keeping up-to-date*, by a commitment to ensure that Cochrane Reviews are maintained through identification and incorporation of new evidence.
- *Striving for excellence*, by promoting the assessment of healthcare interventions using outcomes that matter to people making choices in healthcare.
- *Promoting access*, by wide dissemination of the outputs of the Collaboration, taking advantage of strategic alliances, and by promoting appropriate prices, content and media to meet the needs of users worldwide.
- *Ensuring quality*, by being open and responsive to criticism, applying advances in methodology, and developing systems for quality improvement.
- *Continuity*, by ensuring that responsibility for reviews, editorial processes and key functions is maintained and renewed.
- *Enabling wide participation* in the work of the Collaboration by reducing barriers to contributing and by encouraging diversity.

Structure of the Collaboration

Cochrane Review Groups

The main work of the Collaboration is done by fifty-one Review Groups, within which Cochrane reviews are prepared and maintained. The members of these groups – researchers, healthcare professionals, people using the health 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 Collaboration, each Cochrane 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, coordinating and monitoring the Group's work (a coordinating 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 its systematic reviews. Every Group appoints a review group coordinator to organize and manage the day-to-day activities of the Group.

The work of the Cochrane Review Groups is supported by people working in Methods Groups, Fields, the Consumer Network and Centers.

Methods Groups

The science of research synthesis is 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 assesses 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 healthcare other than health problems, such as the setting of care (e.g. primary care), the type of consumer (e.g. older people), or the type of intervention (e.g. vaccines). People associated with Fields search specialist sources for relevant studies, help to ensure that priorities and perspectives in their sphere of interest are reflected in the work of Cochrane Review Groups, compile specialized databases, coordinate 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.

Centers

The work of Cochrane Review Groups, Methods Groups, Fields and the Consumer Network is facilitated in a variety of ways by the work of twelve Cochrane Centers around the world. They share responsibility for helping to coordinate and support members of the Collaboration in areas such as training, and they promote the objectives of the Collaboration at national level.

Steering Group

All registered Cochrane Review Groups, Methods Groups, Fields, the Consumer Network and Centers are eligible to vote in the election of members to the Collaboration's Steering Group at its Annual General Meeting. The Steering Group meets twice a year and its 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.

Sources of Support

The rapid evolution of the Collaboration owes much to the voluntary effort of many thousands of individuals worldwide. In addition, the work of the Collaboration is being supported by a large variety of institutions and funding organizations in many countries, and these are acknowledged within *The Cochrane Library*.

The Cochrane Library

This is the main output of the Collaboration, updated quarterly and distributed on an annual subscription basis via the Internet and on CD-ROM. It currently includes several different databases:

- *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, contains protocols and reviews of healthcare interventions, prepared and maintained by Cochrane Review Groups. It includes a Comments and Criticisms System to enable users to help improve the quality of Cochrane Reviews.
- *The Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (DARE, Other Reviews)*, assembled and maintained by the Center for Reviews and Dissemination in York, UK, contains critical assessments and structured abstracts of other systematic reviews, conforming to explicit quality criteria.
- *The Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL, Clinical Trials)* contains bibliographic information on hundreds of thousands of controlled trials, including reports published in conference proceedings and many other sources not currently listed in other bibliographic databases.
- *The Cochrane Database of Methodology Reviews (Methods Reviews)* contains Cochrane methodology protocols and reviews of methodological studies prepared by the Methodology Review Group.
- *The Cochrane Methodology Register (CMR, Methods Studies)* contains bibliographic information on articles and books on the science of reviewing research, and a prospective register of methodological studies. *The Cochrane Library*

also contains links to a handbook on how to conduct a systematic review, and a glossary of terms.

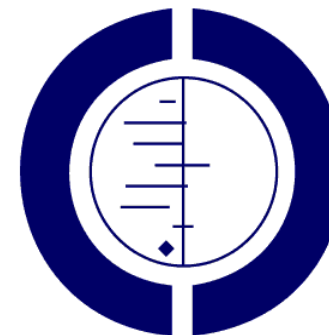
- *The About The Cochrane Collaboration* section in *The Cochrane Library* contains contact details and other information about Cochrane Review Groups and the other contributing entities within the Cochrane Collaboration.
- *The Health Technology Assessment Database* includes details of completed and ongoing health technology assessments from around the world to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of healthcare.

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US COCHRANE CENTER

Preparing, maintaining and promoting the
accessibility of systematic reviews of the effects of
healthcare interventions

A brief introduction

For more detailed information, consult
The US Cochrane Center
web site:

www.cochrane.us

or

The Cochrane Library
www.interscience.wiley.com

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