



THE NORDIC
COCHRANE CENTRE

Annual report

2011



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Introduction

Updated systematic reviews of clinical research are essential for rational decision making in health care and for guiding the planning of new research. The Cochrane Collaboration is a registered charity, founded in 1993. It's major product, The Cochrane Library, contains more than 4,000 regularly updated systematic reviews of interventions in health care.

It is a fundamental right that information that is important to the citizens is transparent and available. Few things are more important than having access to reliable information about the benefits and harms of interventions for preventing and treating diseases. Half of the world's population has free access to Cochrane reviews and the other half has free access to abstracts of Cochrane reviews.

Cochrane reviews are indexed in PubMed. In 2010, the impact factor of Cochrane reviews was 6.2, which ranked in the top 10 of the 151 journals in the ISI category "Medicine, General & Internal."

The Cochrane Collaboration engages more than 25,000 people. Its organisational structure is described at <http://www.cochrane.org/>.

We report here the achievements of The Nordic Cochrane Centre for 2011 and the three review groups based in Denmark in relation to our Strategic Plan 2011-15. For general information about the centre, see <http://www.cochrane.dk/>.

The Nordic Cochrane Centre was established on 13 October 1993. There are branches of the Centre in Finland and Norway and contact persons in Iceland, Poland and Sweden. The branches perform similar work as the Centre but have less formal obligations. The work of the Centre is evaluated by The Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group.

In addition to the centre and its branches, five Cochrane groups are based in the Nordic countries: The Hepato-Biliary Group (Denmark), The Colorectal Cancer Group (Denmark), The Anaesthesia Group (Denmark), The Occupational Health Group (Finland) and The Norwegian satellite of the Effective Practice and Organisation of Care Group (Norway).

The Nordic Cochrane Centre and the three groups based in Denmark are financed by the Danish Government. Other funders are listed in the Annual Reports (<http://www.cochrane.dk/>). We do not accept industry funding.

Citizens in Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Poland and Sweden, and almost all physicians in Finland, have free access to The Cochrane Library on the Internet, and The Cochrane Library is often consulted in these countries.

Selected achievements in 2011

The Nordic Cochrane Centre contributes substantially to The Cochrane Collaboration, particularly in research and IT development.

Research

The Centre is strong in research. In the 5-year period from 2006 to 2010, we published 32 papers in “the big six”: Lancet, BMJ, JAMA, Annals of Internal Medicine, PLoS Medicine and New England Journal of Medicine. Much of this research is of a methodological nature, which contributes to improving the quality and reliability of Cochrane reviews and of randomised trials.

We have updated several Cochrane reviews performed by staff members and we also work on new reviews, focusing on issues of major importance for public health or for our national economies. For example, we published a Cochrane protocol on general health checks in 2011.

We have started a series of PhD courses of relevance for production of Cochrane reviews and for dissemination of the principles for evidence-based medicine and held a course on systematic reviews and one on methodology in 2011.

Selective reporting of favourable results is the biggest threat to evidence-based medicine and to the reliability of Cochrane reviews. Published reports of drug trials are not reliable, but generally exaggerate the benefits and downplay or omit the harms. The result of this is unnecessary and harmful treatment of patients, and we have therefore prioritised to get access to unpublished data at drug agencies.

Helped by the European ombudsman, who concluded his investigations by announcing publicly that the European Medicines Agency's refusal of giving us access to clinical study reports and corresponding protocols was an instance of maladministration, we were granted access in 2010, after 3 years of trying.

This is very important progress for evidence-based medicine, as our case has set a precedent. It is now possible to get access to such documents, which in many cases contain detailed descriptions of the results and the adverse effects in the form of anonymised individual patient data allowing an independent, blinded assessment of the events.

We are currently negotiating with other European drug agencies about getting access, and we also work at the political level in the European Parliament and Commission to gain support to the idea that we must share all data from all clinical trials, including anonymised individual patient data, irrespective of the source of funding. We wrote a Cochrane Statement about this in 2011 and published a long report explaining the issues in the journal *Trials*, which quickly became the most viewed paper in the journal.

We have expanded on our research collaboration with colleagues internationally, primarily with researchers in Canada, Norway, UK, and USA. We co-author guidelines setting standards for good reporting of research: CONSORT for trials, STROBE for observational studies, PRISMA for systematic reviews and SPIRIT for protocols (in development).

The Nordic Cochrane Centre itself is also international. Currently, our staff represents eight different nations and three continents, Europe, Africa and Asia.

IT development

One of the Nordic Cochrane Centre's core contributions to The Cochrane Collaboration is to produce two central software tools: RevMan and Archie – together known as the Information Management System or IMS. RevMan is the desktop application that gives Cochrane authors a user-friendly interface to the complex structure of Cochrane reviews. Archie is the central web application where all Cochrane groups manage their members, reviews, documents and editorial workflows.

The IMS team currently consists of six people (a seventh position is vacant) working in different areas of software development. We are continuously working on developing new versions of both systems and are also responsible for the operation of the Archie servers.

In 2011 The Cochrane Collaboration reaffirmed the IMS team's status as a core team by agreeing to change the funding model from being project-based to a long-term model covering the salaries of core team members. In the organisational structure of The Cochrane Collaboration, the team now reports to the Cochrane Editorial Unit in London instead of reporting to The Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group.

In March 2011 we released RevMan 5.1 with more than 80 new features, including an updated tool for assessment of risk of bias in studies, a calculator tool for facilitating study data entry, PRISMA flow diagrams for describing the selection of studies, and easier creation of Summary of Findings tables.

We contributed considerably to reducing paper work and administration in the Collaboration by turning several paper-based forms into web forms managed in Archie. In January 2011, monitoring forms for Cochrane Review Groups were released; in February, License for Publication forms for review authors; in May, Declaration of Interest forms for review authors; and towards the end of the year we have worked on monitoring forms for Cochrane Centres and Fields (released January 2012).

We have developed and piloted the system for managing the editorial workflows of Cochrane Review Groups over a few years, and in 2011 the Collaboration decided upon the final modifications to make the system ready for roll-out to all Review Groups. We started the development work in May and released the finalised system in October 2011. The result is a unique system that guides its users towards following agreed best practice but also allows a certain degree of customisation required in an organisation as diverse as The Cochrane Collaboration.

In October we released the first version of an online editor for Cochrane reviews. This tool has the advantage over the desktop application, RevMan, that it can be used on any computer connected to the internet without the need for other software than a standard web browser. The editor is currently limited to the main text sections of reviews (excluding tables, figures, etc.) but we plan to expand its scope gradually to cover more sections.

Dissemination

We actively disseminate the results of our own research and those contained in Cochrane reviews to the public, most often via journalists who contact us every week. Every year, there are many articles in Ugeskrift for Læger (the Journal of the Danish Medical Association) that comment on Cochrane reviews from a Danish perspective.

Review Groups in the Nordic region

Cochrane Hepato-Biliary Group

The group was registered on 29 March 1996 and is based in Copenhagen. Issue 1 of The Cochrane Library 2012 contained 126 reviews and 96 protocols. For further information, see The Cochrane Library or <http://ctu.rh.dk/chbg>.

Cochrane Colorectal Cancer Group

The group was registered on 27 January 1998 and is based in Copenhagen. Issue 1 of The Cochrane Library 2011 contained 74 reviews and 59 protocols. For further information, see The Cochrane Library or <http://www.cccg.dk/>.

Cochrane Anaesthesia Group

The Anaesthesia Group (CARG) was registered in February 2000 and is based in Copenhagen. Issue 1 of The Cochrane Library 2011 contained 70 reviews and 65 protocols. For further information, see The Cochrane Library or <http://www.carg.cochrane.org/>.

Cochrane Occupational Safety and Health Group

The Occupational Safety and Health Group was registered in July 2010 and is based in Kuopio. Issue 1 of The Cochrane Library 2011 contained 2 reviews. For further information, see The Cochrane Library or <http://www.ttl.fi/partner/cohf/Pages/default.aspx>.

Norwegian Satellite of the Cochrane Effective Practice and Organisation of Care (EPOC) Group

The Norwegian EPOC Satellite was launched in Oslo in November 2006. The aim of the satellite is to support review authors in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC) and reviews relevant to LMIC, as well as supporting EPOC review authors in the Nordic area. For further information, see The Cochrane Library.

Nordic Cochrane reviews

In the 1st issue of 2012 of The Cochrane Library, 128 reviews and 58 protocols were listed with a Nordic contact address:

Country	Reviews	Protocols
DENMARK	66	31
FINLAND	24	9
NORWAY	28	11
POLAND	1	3
RUSSIA	4	0
SWEDEN	5	4
Total	128	58

Advisory Board for the Nordic Cochrane Centre

The Advisory Board for the Nordic Cochrane Centre provides advice and support about the strategic direction for activities within the Centre. In 2011, the members were:

Doug Altman, Professor of Statistics in Medicine, Oxford, UK
 Gerd Antes, Director, German Cochrane Centre
 Mike Clarke, former Director, UK Cochrane Centre
 Fiona Godlee, Editor-in-Chief, BMJ
 Niels Würgler Hansen, Head of Division, Danish Ministry of Health
 Richard Horton, Editor-in-Chief, The Lancet
 Sine Jensen, Senior Health Adviser, Danish Consumer Council
 Cindy Mulrow, Editor, Annals of Internal Medicine
 Maryann Napoli, Associate Director, Center for Medical Consumers, USA
 Drummond Rennie, Editor, JAMA
 David Tovey, Editor-in-Chief, The Cochrane Collaboration
 Erick Turner, Department of Psychiatry, Oregon Health & Science University

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The Cochrane Collaboration is registered as a charity and it is the responsibility of all contributors and entities to secure their own funding. The staff at The Nordic Cochrane Centre are grateful for the financial support received from our funders and the voluntary help received from many people and institutions since the Centre was founded in 1993 (see previous Annual Reports and Strategic Plans on <http://www.cochrane.dk/>). Currently, the funders for The Nordic Cochrane Centre are:

- The Cochrane Collaboration
- The Danish Government
- The Danish Medical Research Council
- Rigshospitalet
- Sygekassernes Helsefond
- Trygfonden
- University of Copenhagen

Publications in 2011 by staff at The Nordic Cochrane Centre

New or updated Cochrane reviews and protocols

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