



THE NORDIC
COCHRANE CENTRE

Annual report

2010



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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 2009, the impact factor of Cochrane reviews was 5.7, which is rank 11 out of 132 in the ISI category Medicine, General & Internal.

The Cochrane Collaboration is evolving rapidly and 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 2010 and the three review groups based in Denmark in relation to the Strategic Plan 2009-2011. In previous annual reports we also reported the achievements of the branches of the centre, but now follow the practice of other Cochrane centres. 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/>).

Summary of selected achievements in 2010

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.

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

The Centre is very strong in research. In the most recent 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.

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.

In 2007, we applied for access to the clinical study reports and corresponding protocols of placebo-controlled trials of anti-obesity drugs submitted to the Danish and the European Medicines Agencies for marketing approval. It took one year before we were granted access in Denmark, but the manufacturer, Abbott, complained immediately to the Danish Minister of Health, which had the effect that our access was delayed for another year.

The European Medicines Agency denied us access referring to the need for protecting commercial interests, at the same time ignoring our arguments that it was more important to protect the patients. We appealed the Agency’s decision to the Ombudsman of the European Union who concluded that denying us access was an instance of maladministration, whereafter the Agency granted us access 3 years after we submitted our request. The documents we have received contain detailed descriptions of the results and the adverse effects, sometimes in the form of individual patient data, in pdf files. The only information that has been redacted concerns invoices and curriculum vitae for the researchers. This is very important progress for evidence-based medicine, as it should now be much easier to get access because of this precedent.

We have continued 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).

We actively disseminate the results of our own research and those contained in Cochrane reviews to the public. For example, we have summarised the benefits and harms of breast cancer screening in a leaflet that has been translated by volunteers and exist in 13 languages (<http://www.cochrane.dk/>). Since 1996, our Centre has selected reviews from each new issue of The Cochrane Library for possible comments in general medical journals written by content area specialists. This collaboration has involved staff from other Cochrane centres as well. In 2010, we decided after consultation with the main users to stop this activity, as the press releases and other initiatives undertaken by our published, Wiley, were considered sufficient.

Since 1996, The Nordic Cochrane Centre has managed and developed the entire Cochrane Information Management System (IMS) as one of its core contributions to the Collaboration, including the Review Manager software, which is used by authors for preparing Cochrane reviews, and Archie, which is the web application used by the Cochrane Review Groups to manage their editorial processes.

During 2010 we have worked on the development of RevMan 5.1 - a major release containing 70 new features. The new version will be available to Cochrane authors in March 2011.

We have also implemented a number of improvements and additions to Archie, including an advanced search engine that is useful for methodological research on Cochrane reviews, and the application has been moved to be hosted on new servers.

Results in relation to goals for 2009-2011

Goal 1. To ensure high quality, Cochrane reviews are available

The methods used in preparing and maintaining systematic reviews are under constant development. Improving quality and reliability of reviews, and of research studies in general, are major concerns for The Cochrane Collaboration and for The Nordic Cochrane Centre. The Centre is globally responsible for developing and maintaining the Cochrane Information Management System (IMS) on behalf of The Cochrane Collaboration. The system is partly internet-based and consists of software and processes that supports the preparation and publication of Cochrane reviews that routinely account for sources of bias and their influence on the findings in the reviews. More information about software development by The Nordic Cochrane Centre can be found at <http://ims.cochrane.org/>.

Target 1.1: Continue to improve the Review Manager (RevMan) software by working closely with RevMan Advisory Group and the Information Management Advisory Group. *Done, RevMan 5.1 has been developed and will be ready for release in March 2011. The structure of the Cochrane IT committees was revisited in 2010 and resulted in the formation of the RevMan Advisory Committee and the Information Systems Operating Committee. We continue to work closely with these groups.*

Target 1.2: Conduct methodological research, contribute to improving the quality and reliability of Cochrane reviews, recruit new researchers, and collaborate with researchers nationally and internationally. *Done, see Publications.*

Target 1.3: Prepare and update Cochrane reviews performed by staff members, provide training for authors of Cochrane reviews, and provide support to Cochrane Review Groups and other entities based in the Nordic region, contribute to recruitment of new review authors, and increase regional participation in The Cochrane Collaboration. *Done (Cochrane reviews are only listed under Publications if they are new or major updates, and therefore get a new entry in PubMed).*

Target 1.4: Organise PhD courses of relevance for production of Cochrane reviews and for dissemination of the principles for evidence-based medicine. *Done, ongoing process.*

Target 1.5: Contribute to ensuring that all results of all trials, and trial protocols, become publicly accessible. *Done, see description above about our access to unpublished data at the Danish and European Medicines Agencies.*

Target 1.6: Co-ordinate the editorial process for protocols and reviews in the Cochrane Methodology Review Group and update the Cochrane Methodology Register (register of articles on research methodology). *Done (Norwegian Branch).*

Target 1.7: Contribute to relevant working groups, workshops and courses on research methodology, editing, evidence-based medicine, and initiatives for improving the relevance and quality of research (CONSORT for trials, GRADE for grading the evidence, PRISMA for systematic reviews, SPIRIT for protocols, STARD for diagnostic tests, STROBE for observational studies). *Done, resulted in several publications.*

Target 1.8: Handsearch general medical journals in the Nordic area for randomised trials, provide English titles and keywords for trials that are not indexed on PubMed, and provide help with translations of research reports written in Nordic languages. *Done; handsearches have low priority now as the indexing of Nordic journals is much improved.*

Goal 2. To promote access to Cochrane reviews

Target 2.1: Ensure continued funding for making The Cochrane Library freely available for all Nordic citizens. *Done, and ongoing.*

Target 2.2: Provide support to patients and liaise with patient organisations, contribute to making the interface for The Cochrane Library more user-friendly, with better indexing and browsing systems, and update the homepage that helps Nordic citizens use The Cochrane Library. *Done.*

Target 2.3: Co-ordinate the process of selecting interesting new Cochrane reviews for comments in journals of the Nordic national medical associations (the dissemination project). *Done.*

Target 2.4: Collaborate with the media to promote awareness and use of Cochrane reviews. *Done; the media contact us every week about the scientific basis for their stories.*

Target 2.5: Contribute to improving the readability and relevance of Cochrane reviews. *Done.*

Goal 3. To ensure an efficient, transparent organisational structure

Target 3.1: Contribute to effective communication ensuring that key responsibilities and roles are described for all contributors to the Collaboration and are easily searchable. *Done. The Nordic Cochrane Centre continues to develop and operate the Collaboration's central server, Archie, for managing documents, contacts details and the editorial processes of the Cochrane Review Groups.*

Target 3.2: Contribute to ensuring that Nordic Cochrane entities adhere to the practices and policies of The Cochrane Collaboration, and that any conflicts of interest are declared for all contributors. *Done.*

Target 3.3: Contribute to resolving conflicts between individuals and entities. *Done; we have provided assistance to authors.*

Target 3.4: Maintain user-friendly web sites for pivotal projects. *Done; the IMS website was improved and moved to a new platform in 2010.*

Target 3.5: Contribute to ensuring that all decision-making processes and relationships within The Cochrane Collaboration are transparent and explicit. *Done. In 2010, we raised an important issue with the publication arbiters and the Editor-in-Chief, which were satisfactorily resolved.*

Target 3.6: By working closely with the Cochrane IT committees, continuing to improve the Information Management System, including the internet-based server, Archie, which consists of a central review database, workflow management tools, systems for preparing modules of information from Cochrane entities, tools for providing Cochrane material to the publisher for publication, and an address database for Cochrane contributors. *The Nordic Cochrane Centre has worked closely with the Editor-in-Chief for The Cochrane Library and other staff at the Cochrane Editorial Unit at improving the IMS. The improvements include an advanced search engine that is useful for methodological research on Cochrane reviews, a system for improving the cross-linking between Cochrane reviews, electronic Licence for Publication forms for Cochrane reviews, monitoring forms for Cochrane Review Groups, and improvements to the editorial workflow system.*

Goal 4. To achieve sustainability of The Cochrane Collaboration

Target 4.1: Contribute to ensuring support for the Nordic Cochrane entities. *Done; we have also tried to achieve a larger core funding but so far without success.*

Target 4.2: Contribute to ensuring that the preparation and maintenance of Cochrane reviews receive full academic recognition. *Done, Cochrane reviews receive full academic recognition.*

Target 4.3: Contribute to the development of the Collaboration and its software by sales of licences to software to third-parties for commercial use. *Done, a few licences sold.*

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 2011 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 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 2011 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 2010, the members were:

Doug Altman, Professor of Statistics in Medicine, Oxford, UK
 Gerd Antes, Director, German Cochrane Centre
 Mike Clarke, Director, UK Cochrane Centre
 Fiona Godlee, Editor-in-Chief, BMJ
 Niels Würzler 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

Acknowledgements

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 and branches 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 in Copenhagen are:

- The Danish Government
- The Cochrane Collaboration
- The Danish Medical Research Council
- Sygekassernes Helsefond

Publications in 2010 by staff at The Nordic Cochrane Centre

New or updated Cochrane reviews and protocols

Gotzsche PC, Johansen HK. Intravenous alpha-1 antitrypsin augmentation therapy for treating patients with alpha-1 antitrypsin deficiency and lung disease. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2010;(7):CD007851.

Hrobjartsson A, Gotzsche PC. Placebo interventions for all clinical conditions. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev* 2010;(1):CD003974.

Journal articles, books

Brodersen J, Jorgensen KJ, Gotzsche PC. The benefits and harms of screening for cancer with a focus on breast screening. *Pol Arch Med Wewn* 2010;120(3):89-94.

Cordoba G, Schwartz L, Woloshin S, Bae H, Gotzsche PC. Definition, reporting, and interpretation of composite outcomes in clinical trials: systematic review. *BMJ* 2010;341:c3920.

Gotzsche PC, Berg S. Sleep apnoea: from person to patient, and back again. *BMJ* 2010;340:c360.

Gotzsche PC, Johansen HK. Intravenous alpha-1 antitrypsin augmentation therapy: systematic review. *Dan Med Bull* 2010;57(9):A4175.

Gotzsche PC, Delamothe T, Godlee F, Lundh A. Adequacy of authors' replies to criticism raised in electronic letters to the editor: cohort study. *BMJ* 2010;341:c3926.

Jorgensen AW, Gotzsche PC. [Insufficient access to research data not acceptable]. *Ugeskr Laeger* 2010;172(21):1585.

Jorgensen AW, Jorgensen KJ, Gotzsche PC. Unbalanced reporting of benefits and harms in abstracts on rofecoxib. *Eur J Clin Pharmacol* 2010;66(4):341-7.

Jorgensen KJ. Mammography screening is not as good as we hoped. *Maturitas* 2010;65(1):1-2.

Jorgensen KJ, Zahl PH, Gotzsche PC. Breast cancer mortality in organised mammography screening in Denmark: comparative study. *BMJ* 2010;340:c1241.

Jorgensen KJ, Gotzsche PC. Who evaluates public health programmes? A review of the NHS Breast Screening Programme. *J R Soc Med* 2010;103(1):14-20.

Jorgensen KJ. Systematic review: Mammography reduces breast cancer mortality in women aged 39-69 years; but harms may outweigh benefits in women under 50. *Evid Based Med* 2010;15(2):62-3.

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Lundh A, Barbateskovic M, Hrobjartsson A, Gotzsche PC. Conflicts of interest at medical journals: the influence of industry-supported randomised trials on journal impact factors and revenue - cohort study. *PLoS Med* 2010;7(10):e1000354.

Moher D, Hopewell S, Schulz KF, Montori V, Gotzsche PC, Devereaux PJ, et al. [CONSORT 2010 Explanation and Elaboration: updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials (Chinese version)]. *Zhong Xi Yi Jie He Xue Bao* 2010;8(8):701-41.

Moher D, Hopewell S, Schulz KF, Montori V, Gotzsche PC, Devereaux PJ, et al. CONSORT 2010 explanation and elaboration: updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials. *BMJ* 2010;340:c869.

Moher D, Hopewell S, Schulz KF, Montori V, Gotzsche PC, Devereaux PJ, et al. CONSORT 2010 Explanation and Elaboration: Updated guidelines for reporting parallel group randomised trials. *J Clin Epidemiol* 2010;63(8):e1-37.

Wandel S, Juni P, Tendal B, Nuesch E, Villiger PM, Welton NJ, et al. Effects of glucosamine, chondroitin, or placebo in patients with osteoarthritis of hip or knee: network meta-analysis. *BMJ* 2010;341:c4675.

Letters, book reviews, etc

Andreasen JO, Ahrensburg SS, Tendal B. Inappropriate use of meta-analysis in an evidence-based assessment of the clinical guidelines for replanted avulsed teeth. Timing of pulp extirpation, splinting periods and prescription of systemic antibiotics. *Dent Traumatol* 2010;26(5):359-60.

Baum M, Thornton H, Gotzsche PC, Bewley S, Jorgensen KJ, Barratt A, et al. Breast cancer awareness month. Still awaiting screening facts. *BMJ* 2010;341:c6152.

Gotzsche P. Depression severity and effect of antidepressant medications. *JAMA* 2010;303(16):1597.

Gotzsche PC. [When one doesn't WANT to see the evidence?]. *Ugeskr Laeger* 2010;172(9):733.

Gotzsche PC, Lundh A. [The rheumatologists' conflict of interest and biological medicines]. *Ugeskr Laeger* 2010;172(45):3126.

Gotzsche PC, Jorgensen KJ, Zahl PH. Breast screening: why estimates differ by a factor of 20-25. *J Med Screen* 2010;17(3):158-9.

Gotzsche PC. Lessons from the mammography wars. *N Engl J Med* 2010;363(26):2569.

Jorgensen KJ, Gotzsche PC. The background review for the USPSTF recommendation on screening for breast cancer. *Ann Intern Med* 2010;152(8):538-9.

Jørgensen KJ, Gøtzsche PC. Where is the effect of mammography screening? *BMJ* 16 August 2010 http://www.bmj.com/content/341/bmj.c3620.full/reply#bmj_el_240368

Jørgensen KJ, Gøtzsche PC. Rapid response: No visible effect of mammography screening in Denmark. *BMJ* 30 March 2010 http://www.bmj.com/cgi/eletters/340/mar23_1/c1241.

Jørgensen KJ, Gøtzsche PC. Rapid response: Mammography screening hasn't lived up to expectations. *BMJ* 15 April 2010 http://www.bmj.com/cgi/eletters/340/mar23_1/c1241.

Dissertations

Tendal B. Standardised mean difference in meta-analyses - How reliable is it in practice? (PhD thesis). Defended at the University of Copenhagen 26 August 2010.

Awards received

Karsten Juhl Jørgensen: Young Elite Researcher Award, Danish Ministry of Science.