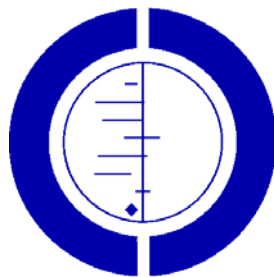

Training and Supporting
UK Contributors to
The Cochrane Database of
Systematic Reviews



Annual Report
2001

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Acknowledgements

I returned from Australia in January 2001 to continue overseeing the UKCC training programme. It has been another busy year, with preparation for some major changes in the content of our workshop programme for 2002.

Paola Babbini Baker left the UKCC to have a baby, and Lizi Gliddon, who has worked at the Centre on and off for longer than I have, filled her post till January 2002. We now have a new permanent replacement for Paola – Sarahjayne Sierra. Nicola Thornton has kept the workshop programme running smoothly during these changes.

I'm delighted to welcome Esther Coren to work at the UKCC as a training lecturer, starting February 2002. This will make the workshop programme more sustainable, and enable us to continue with new developments.

The main source of funding for the training programme is the NHS R&D Programme. The Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry has also provided financial support for the training programme, for which we are very grateful.

Thanks are due once again to our workshop facilitators:

Clive Adams, Phil Alderson, Anne-Marie Bagnall, Anna Bara, Sally Bell-Syer, Janine Bestall, Chris Cates, Mike Clarke, June Cody, Mandy Collingwood, Frances Fairman, Mark Fenton, Simon Gilbody, Jeremy Grimshaw, Sally Hopewell, Chris Hyde, Toby Lasserson, Sarah Lewington, Stephen Milan, Graham Mowatt, Andrea Nelson, Nancy Owens, Felix Ram, Lindsay Stead, Ruth Thomas, Carl Thompson, Nicola Thornton



Phil Alderson
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Executive Summary

- During 2001, 183 participants filled 272 workshop places
- Workshop participants' feedback continues to be good
- About two thirds of participants go on to publish a review in *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*
- The workshop programme will extend to Ireland in 2002
- As a result of reviewer feedback, the 'Getting a review into RevMan' workshop will be replaced in 2002 with a workshop called 'Introduction to analysis'
- Distance learning material for reviewers should be released in August 2002
- The UKCC has been awarded extra resources to help improve the capacity of the NHS to undertake systematic reviews

Introduction

The Cochrane Collaboration has continued to grow, and the UK continues to make a major contribution to this. About 40% of all Cochrane reviews have a contact author based in the UK, and UK-based review groups process about 60% of all Cochrane reviews.

Demand for systematic reviews within the National Health Service is growing. The establishment of NICE, with its appraisal and guideline programmes, mean the skills of research synthesis are in short supply. This has been recognised by the NHS R&D Programme, which is investing in review capacity. As part of this, the UKCC was awarded additional resources, which have enabled us to employ a lecturer. This will allow us to contribute to meeting the shortfall of review skills by training Cochrane reviewers, training trainers, and helping to train and support the UK-based review groups, which act as a focus for supporting reviewers.

Particular challenges facing the Cochrane Collaboration are ensuring that Cochrane reviews continue to be of high, and improving, quality, and ensuring that reviews are kept up to date. The science of research synthesis is progressing rapidly, and our training programme aims to ensure that reviewers are familiar with the latest knowledge emerging from relevant methodological research, not least that from the UKCC's research programme. Achieving this with around 200 new reviewers each year is a challenge, which we plan to meet by providing distance learning material to supplement the *Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook*, and our workshops.

The Cochrane Collaboration has a framework in place to keep reviews up to date, but we need to be creative in finding ways to make this happen, particularly as reviewers are largely volunteers. There is no comparable system for updating research that we can learn from, so this will be a considerable challenge.

1. Cochrane Reviewer Training

1.1 Workshops

1.1.1 Locations

During 2001, UKCC workshops were held in Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, Oxford and York. We held 11 workshops on 'Developing a protocol for a review', and ten on 'Getting a review into RevMan'. We plan to continue to hold workshops around the UK during 2002.

We are very pleased that we are able to hold Protocol workshops in Belfast, Dublin and Cork during 2002, with financial support from the Irish government and logistic support from health departments in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

1.1.2 Facilitators, including Training the Trainers planned for January 2002

There is some turnover in our pool of facilitators as people change jobs and move. We continue to encourage review group co-ordinators to act as facilitators. As we plan to introduce a new workshop in 2002 (see below), we are holding a 'training the trainers' event in January 2002 to cover some of this material.

1.1.3 Participants

During 2001, 272 workshop places were filled by 183 participants, some attending more than one workshop. This is an increase of about 10% on the calendar year 2000. The figures in this report's tables cover 12 months, whereas last year's report covered 14 months, so the numbers for 1999/2000 and 2001 are not strictly comparable.

During 2001, nearly all participants came from the UK (Table 1).

Cochrane Reviewer Training

Table 1 Area of residence of workshop participants

	94-95 n=87	95-96 n=127	96-97 n=139	97-98 n=163	98-99 n=235	99-00 n=273	2001 n=183
UK	69%	88%	96%	96%	97%	96%	96%
Rest of Europe	13%	7%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%
America (North & South)	9%	3%	-	1%	1%	1%	-
Australasia	7%	1%	-	-	-	-	-
Africa	-	1%	-	-	-	-	1%
Asia	2%	-	-	-	-	-	1%

1.1.4 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' workshops

Over 70% of participants complete a feedback form for Protocol and RevMan workshops.

The level of experience of workshop participants has remained very similar over the years (Tables 2 & 3), with most reporting little experience.

Table 2 Participants' rating of their previous experience of preparing a protocol for a systematic review

Rating* of experience	Year (% of Total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	70%	73%	76%	65%	74%	73%	68%
4-7	22%	25%	24%	35%	24%	24%	31%
8-10	8%	3%	0%	1%	2%	3%	1%

* 1 = wondering how to start, 10 = completed several protocols

Cochrane Reviewer Training

Table 3 Participants' rating of their previous experience of completing a systematic review

Rating* of experience	Year (% of Total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	67%	74%	83%	72%	79%	79%	80%
4-7	21%	20%	17%	26%	19%	18%	17%
8-10	12%	6%	0%	2%	2%	3%	3%

* 1 = wondering how to start, 10 = completed several reviews

As in previous years, most participants find the workshops helpful and enjoyable (Tables 4 & 5). The figures have changed little over the years.

Table 4 Participants' rating of the protocol workshop in terms of what they learned

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	3%	3%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%
4-7	52%	40%	55%	35%	37%	33%	37%
8-10	45%	57%	45%	64%	61%	66%	63%

* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

Cochrane Reviewer Training

Table 5 Participants' rating of their enjoyment of the discussion groups

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%
4-7	30%	18%	28%	27%	23%	18%	20%
8-10	70%	81%	72%	72%	78%	82%	79%

* 1 = not at all, 10 = very much

We also collect qualitative comments on the workshops, and these show that participants continue to find the small, multidisciplinary groups popular. Requests for more detail on statistical issues are being addressed by the new workshop on analysis (see below).

1.1.5 'Getting a Review into RevMan' Workshops

Most participants have little experience of using RevMan before the workshop, and the majority find it a useful day (Tables 6, 7 & 8).

Table 6 Participants' rating of their previous experience of using *RevMan*

Rating* of experience	Year (% of total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	82%	80%	84%	91%	80%	74%	89%
4-7	19%	18%	16%	7%	19%	24%	10%
8-10	0%	2%	0%	2%	2%	2%	2%

* 1 = hadn't touched it before, 10 = had entered several reviews

Cochrane Reviewer Training

Table 7 Participants' rating of the RevMan workshop in terms of what they learned

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	4%	2%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%
4-7	33%	32%	29%	35%	24%	33%	26%
8-10	63%	67%	71%	62%	76%	67%	74%

* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

Table 8 Participants' rating of the usefulness of the workshop for getting their review into RevMan

Rating* of usefulness	Year (% of total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	4%	2%	6%	3%	2%	0%	0%
4-7	52%	45%	27%	38%	24%	40%	32%
8-10	44%	53%	68%	59%	74%	60%	68%

* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

The proportion finding the demonstration of RevMan useful seems to have increased (Table 9), although the format hasn't been changed.

Cochrane Reviewer Training

Table 9 Participants' rating of the usefulness of the demonstration of RevMan

Rating* of demonstration	Year (% of total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	4%	4%	7%	2%	0%	1%	0%
4-7	54%	46%	47%	51%	36%	46%	29%
8-10	42%	50%	47%	47%	64%	53%	71%

* 1 = *outstandingly unhelpful*, 10 = *outstandingly helpful*

Most reviewers also report enjoying the workshop (Table 10).

Table 10 Participants' rating of their enjoyment of the 'RevMan' workshop

Rating* of Enjoyment	Year (% of total)						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
1-3	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
4-7	22%	21%	11%	24%	23%	30%	19%
8-10	78%	79%	90%	76%	77%	70%	81%

* 1 = *not at all*, 10 = *very much*

Cochrane Reviewer Training

The vast majority of reviewers come to the RevMan workshop to familiarise themselves with the RevMan software. Although the workshop does seem to meet this need well, we have found increasingly that reviewers can do this by using the self-directed RevMan exercise. This takes two to three hours, and so reviewers often leave the workshop before the end. Reviewers tend to be familiar with Windows based software and quickly feel comfortable with RevMan. As a result, we have decided that we should encourage reviewers to teach themselves to use RevMan outside a workshop. This frees up resources currently used to run these workshops, which we will use to run analysis workshops, as described in section 2.1.

1.1.6 Output

As in previous years, we have looked at *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* to see how many of our workshop participants have gone on to publish protocols and reviews on the database. It takes some time for a reviewer to publish a complete review after attending a workshop, as the review will then go through many other steps. As shown in Table 11, over half of the participants publish a protocol or review within two years, and in the long term around two thirds of participants publish a review.

Table 11 Participants who have published at least one protocol or review in Issue 4/2001 of 'The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews'

	Year first attended a workshop						
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001
Participants with at least 1 review	64%	62%	55%	45%	28%	13%	1%
Participants with no reviews but at least one protocol	2%	13%	10%	19%	30%	33%	15%
Participants with no reviews or protocols	34%	25%	35%	35%	42%	64%	69%

Cochrane Reviewer Training

1.2 New for 2002

1.2.1 'Introduction to Analysis' workshop

This workshop has been developed in response to requests on participants' feedback forms from Protocol and RevMan workshops. In addition, the work of the Cochrane Collaboration's Quality Advisory Group is beginning to give a picture of common methodological issues in complete reviews. Many of these concern the analysis within reviews, and we hope that this workshop will help to avoid some problems in reviews.

The content was determined by surveying previous participants at RevMan workshops with a list of possible topics, and asking them to rank the ones they thought would be usefully covered in a workshop. Some of the material was drawn from that developed for the 'Finishing School for Systematic Reviews' in conjunction with the Oxford Systematic Reviews Development Programme. The programme is shown in the appendix.

A pilot workshop was held in Liverpool in December 2001, which was well received. The workshop replaces the RevMan workshops from February 2002.

1.2.2 Distance learning material

We have made significant progress on developing distance learning material for Cochrane reviewers – a project started in 2000. This has been a collaborative effort between the UK, Australasian and Nordic Cochrane Centres and the Statistical Methods Group. We plan to launch the first version of this at the Stavanger Colloquium in July 2002. After that, it will be updated in line with the *Reviewers' Handbook*.

1.2.3 Local support pilot 2002/3

During 2002/3 we hope to pilot a scheme where we will support experienced Cochrane reviewers in the UK to provide 'review clinics' for less experienced reviewers living nearby. We see this as a way of helping to ensure that best use is made of the experience now accumulating within the UK to help newer reviewers.

2. Training and Support of Editorial Teams

2.1 UK Cochrane Training and Support Network

This network, organised to provide training and support for editorial teams, by editorial teams, has now effectively been replaced by the employment of a training lecturer at the UKCC, who takes a lead in organising editorial team development. The resources that supported the training network were never very secure, and the groups who took on the role have found that they need to concentrate on their core functions. In addition, two of the groups that acted as training nodes have moved – EPOC to Canada, and the Schizophrenia Group to Leeds. This would have meant reorganising the network anyway, but without resources to go along with it, it seemed a sensible time to end that arrangement.

2.2 UK Contributors' Meeting

The Annual Meeting for UK Contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration remains a key event. In 2002, we plan to hold a training day for editorial teams on the day before the contributors meeting, in part to replace the activities of the UK Cochrane Training and Support Network. We will then evaluate this model of providing training and support, and review the position for the following year.

2.3 Bursaries

We continue to provide bursaries for review group editors to attend the 'Finishing School for Systematic Reviews' organised by the Oxford Systematic Review Development Programme. This has proved a popular way of updating editors with methodological issues.

2.4 Signposts

The UK Cochrane Centre has supported the *Signposts* document for several years now. At the moment, review groups are being consulted on whether it is sensible to update this document. If so, we will once again support its updating.

3. Other Activities

3.1 Aubrey Sheiham Cochrane Collaboration Public Health and Primary Care Scholarship

This scholarship was awarded for the first time in 2002. It enables a reviewer from a developing country to come and live in Oxford for four months, to be trained in how to do a systematic review, and work on a systematic review. The first scholar was Charles Shey Wiysonge from Cameroon, who worked on two reviews with the HIV/AIDS Group.

The scholarship will be awarded annually, and we particularly hope it will stimulate Cochrane activity in countries where there are currently few, or no, reviewers.

3.2 Statistical Methods Group summer school

In the summer of 2000, the UKCC and Cochrane Collaboration sponsored a week-long summer school for statisticians supporting Cochrane review groups. This was organised by the convenors of the Statistical Methods Group. The course seemed to be appreciated by the participants, and we hope that it will help statisticians to interact with review groups.

3.3 RCN NICE Collaborating Centre

Phil Alderson is on the management board of this centre, based at the RCN Institute in Oxford, and provides advice on systematic review methods. It is one of several centres commissioned by the National Institute of Clinical Excellence to produce guidelines for the NHS. Part of the guideline process involves using and, where necessary, preparing systematic reviews to inform the guidelines.

APPENDIX

Programme for 'Introduction to Analysis' Workshop

0900	Registration & refreshments
0930	Introduction to meta-analysis
1015	Applying eligibility criteria (practical)
<i>1130</i>	<i>Break</i>
1145	Binary data: summary statistics and choosing an effect measure
<i>1245</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
1330	Extracting data (practical)
1430	Continuous data
<i>1515</i>	<i>Break</i>
1530	Heterogeneity
1600	Publication bias
1630	Questions

Training and supporting UK contributors to *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*

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