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



Annual Report
2002

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Acknowledgements

2002 was a very busy year for the training team with the introduction of a new type of workshop, new training on the island of Ireland and completion of the Open Learning Material, as well as the usual round of workshops.

Sarahjayne Sierra has taken on much of the running of the workshop programme, and I'm grateful for all the work she's done making sure things work smoothly and redesigning our administrative database. Nicola Thornton has been more involved in organising the training on the island of Ireland, helping to produce the Open Learning Material, running the Sheiham Scholarship, and helping to pilot some consumer training with Gill Gyte. Esther Coren started work as a Lecturer in February 2002 and has taken a lead in organising training for editorial base staff, as well as developing new training material and improving existing material.

Our main source of funding remains the NHS R&D Programme, with an important contribution from the Association of the British Pharmaceutical Industry.

I'd particularly like to thank Jon Deeks and Julian Higgins of the Cochrane Statistical Methods Group. They have helped in explaining statistical concepts to us, allowing us to use their teaching material, commenting on our material, writing the statistical modules of the Open Learning Material, and in many other ways. The training programme wouldn't be what it is without their help.

Of course, we couldn't deliver our training without the help of a number of facilitators, to whom we're very grateful:

Clive Adams, Fiona Alderdice, Frances Bunn, Anne-Marie Bagnall, Sally Bell-Syer, Mike Clarke, June Cody, Mandy Collingwood, Jane Dennis, Rumona Dickson, Frances Fairman, Mark Fenton, Simon Gilbody, Anne-Marie Glenny, Gill Gyte, Sally Hollis, Sally Hopewell, Chris Hyde, Jos Kleijnen, Peter Langhorne, Toby Lasserson, Heather Maxwell, Stephen Milan, Tess Moore, Andrea Nelson, Vanessa Poustie, Carrol Preston, Felix Ram, and Catrin Tudur-Smith.



Phil Alderson
February 2003

Executive Summary

The appointment of Esther Coren as a Lecturer in systematic reviews has allowed a significant expansion of training.

The 2002 UKCC training programme consisted of:

- Training for reviewers
 - 13 workshops on 'Developing a Protocol' for a Review
 - 11 'Introduction to Analysis' workshops (a new workshop in 2002)
 - 341 places on these workshops, filled by 236 participants, a 25% increase on 2001
 - a self-directed RevMan exercise
 - the completion and launch of the Cochrane Collaboration Open Learning Material for Reviewers

- A two-day training workshop for facilitators

- A training day for review group editorial team members

- The Annual Meeting of UK Contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration for over 200 people

- Training workshops at the Cochrane Colloquium in Stavanger

- Four three-day introductory systematic review courses on the island of Ireland

- Involvement in other training and consultancy
 - the Oxford Systematic Review Development Programme eight-day course on systematic reviews
 - a two-day training event for members of NICE Collaborating Centres
 - advice to the NICE National Collaborating Centre for Nursing and Supportive Care
 - advice to the National Blood Service's Systematic Reviews Initiative
 - the Aubrey Sheiham Cochrane Collaboration Public Health and Primary Care Scholarship

Introduction

The Cochrane Collaboration continues to grow worldwide, and the UKCC training programme continues to develop in response to the needs of contributors in the UK and Ireland. During 2002 we introduced a new type of workshop for reviewers, expanded training on the island of Ireland, launched the Open Learning Material for reviewers, and expanded our training and support for editorial teams. In a large part, this was made possible by two developments - the NHS R&D Programme funding a Lecturer post at the UKCC and financial and logistical support from the Health Research Board in Dublin and the R&D Office in Belfast. These initiatives have helped to ensure increasing capacity to meet the demand for systematic reviews from the NHS.

This report does not cover the training and support that UKCC staff provide to those in Cochrane review groups who work on the identification and registration of reports of trials. Those activities are reported elsewhere, as are many of the more general support functions of the UKCC.

1. Cochrane Reviewer Training

1.1 Workshops

During 2002, UKCC workshops were held in Belfast, Bristol, Dublin, Edinburgh, Liverpool, London, Oxford and York. We held 13 workshops on 'Developing a protocol for a review', and 11 on 'Introduction to Analysis'. We plan to run one set of workshops each year in Scotland, alternating between Edinburgh and Aberdeen, two sets on the island of Ireland, with the rest located around England.

1.2 Participants

During 2002, 341 workshop places were filled by 236 participants, some attending more than one workshop. This is an increase of about 25% on 2001.

During 2002, nearly all participants came from the UK.

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	2002 n=236
UK	69%	88%	96%	96%	97%	96%	96%	97%
Rest of Europe	13%	7%	3%	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%
Americas and Caribbean	9%	3%	-	1%	1%	1%	-	1%
Australasia	7%	1%	-	-	-	-	-	-
Africa	-	1%	-	-	-	-	1%	-
Asia	2%	-	-	-	-	-	1%	-

1.3 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' workshops

Over 75% of participants completed a feedback form for reviewer workshops.

The level of experience of workshop participants has remained stable. It is pleasing that people with little previous experience of reviews are still becoming involved in the Cochrane Collaboration, with no sign of the numbers decreasing.

Cochrane Reviewer Training

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	2002
1-3	70%	73%	76%	65%	74%	73%	68%	67%
4-7	22%	25%	24%	35%	24%	24%	31%	29%
8-10	8%	3%	0%	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%

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

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	2002
1-3	67%	74%	83%	72%	79%	79%	80%	76%
4-7	21%	20%	17%	26%	19%	18%	17%	22%
8-10	12%	6%	0%	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%

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

Most participants find the workshops helpful and enjoyable, as in previous 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	2002
1-3	3%	3%	0%	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%
4-7	52%	40%	55%	35%	37%	33%	37%	32%
8-10	45%	57%	45%	64%	61%	66%	63%	68%

* 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	2002
1-3	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%
4-7	30%	18%	28%	27%	23%	18%	20%	25%
8-10	70%	81%	72%	72%	78%	82%	79%	75%

* 1 = not at all, 10 = very much

Qualitative comments on the form were generally very positive, with most suggestions for changes being to ask for more time.

1.4 'Introduction to Analysis' Workshops

This workshop mixes didactic and practical sessions to cover some of the most commonly encountered statistical issues and practical problems. The timetable is attached as Appendix I. The topics were chosen after surveying previous workshop attendees, asking them what they thought should be included. A pilot workshop was run in December 2001, and the workshop introduced in January 2002. During August, we updated the material in response to feedback from the first few months of use. Over the year, we have involved several facilitators teaching this material for the first time. Inevitably, there is a period where presentations improve as facilitators become more familiar with the material.

The majority of attendees have little previous experience of systematic reviews, although they are slightly more experienced than the average attendee at a Protocol workshop.

Table 6 Participants' rating of their previous experience in doing systematic reviews

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)
	2002
1-3	62%
4-7	36%
8-10	2%

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

Cochrane Reviewer Training

For individual sessions, few participants gave a poor rating, with about half giving very good scores for usefulness. There is some room for improvement compared to the scores in the Protocol workshops as facilitators become more familiar with the material.

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

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)
	2002
1-3	1%
4-7	42%
8-10	57%

* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

Table 8 Participants' rating of the helpfulness of individual sessions

Rating* of workshop	Introduction to meta-analysis	Study eligibility	Binary data	Data extraction	Continuous data	Heterogeneity	Publication bias
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 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

Most of the qualitative comments were good, with participants remarking on the clear explanation of often-difficult concepts. Some comments related to the amount of information we try to fit into the day, which sometimes makes the workshop feel rushed. We will consider altering the timetable to reduce the feeling of time pressure.

Cochrane Reviewer Training

1.5 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 9, 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 9 Participants who have published at least one protocol or review in Issue 4/2002 of 'The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews'

	Year first attended workshop							
	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001	2002
Participants with at least 1 review	67%	68%	61%	48%	37%	22%	7%	5%
Participants with no reviews but at least one protocol	2%	9%	6%	17%	24%	38%	39%	14%
Participants with no reviews or protocols	31%	23%	33%	35%	40%	40%	54%	82%

1.6 RevMan exercise

Now that the UKCC no longer offers workshops on using RevMan software, we hand out a self directed RevMan exercise at the end of the Protocol workshop. This teaches most of the steps used in the software by using examples. It was originally devised by David Badger (formerly of the Australasian Cochrane Centre) and has been updated by Phil Alderson. It is currently being updated for the release of version 4.2 of RevMan during 2003.

1.7 Open Learning Material

In late 2002, the Cochrane Collaboration Open Learning Material for Reviewers was launched. This is a modular, self-directed course designed to accompany the Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook. Phil Alderson of the UKCC and Sally Green of the Australasian Cochrane Centre edit it, with contributions from both editors, Jon Deeks, Julian Higgins and Chris Silagy. Jacob Riis of the Nordic Cochrane Centre converted it into web format. The material is freely available on CD from Cochrane collaborative review groups or on the web at www.cochrane-net.org/openlearning.

It is envisaged that the material will be updated every two years.

2. Other Training

2.1 Facilitator training

We continue to recruit new facilitators to help with our workshop programme and, because of the introduction of the new type of workshop, have needed to introduce facilitators to new material. To help in this we ran a two-day 'Training the Trainers' event in January 2002 with help from Sally Green of the Australasian Cochrane Centre who was spending a month at the UKCC at the time. The workshop covered small group teaching skills and material from the new analysis workshop. The programme is attached as Appendix II. The workshop was generally well received by the participants.

We plan to run a similar event in 2003.

2.2 Training and Development for UK based members of Collaborative Review Group Editorial teams

The first Editorial Training Event was held at St Catherine's College on 21 March 2002, the day before the Annual Meeting of UK Contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration. The aim was to meet the training needs of staff of UK based Collaborative Review Group editorial bases, and other members of editorial teams. Consultation was undertaken in advance to assess need and demand for such a day. The meeting was attended by eight co-ordinating editors, 17 review group co-ordinators, 11 trials search co-ordinators, 10 editors, four statistical editors and eight others, making a total of 58 participants.

The target group of such an event is diverse, including individuals with a variety of different roles and responsibilities. The challenge is to provide a training opportunity that encompasses the varied needs of the group within the organisational priorities of the Cochrane Collaboration e.g. keeping reviews up to date, maintaining high quality output. The programme is attached as Appendix III.

The feedback was, on the whole, positive, with some reservations. Following this, we arranged a meeting of a representative group from editorial teams to discuss the needs of the target group and how to meet them. As a result of this, editorial training for 2003 will take place during the Annual Meeting of UK Contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration, as part of a much expanded workshop programme. In 2002 there were 16 workshops offered at that meeting as well as two reviewer clinics. By contrast, in 2003 there will be more than 40 different workshops, arranged in streams to meet training needs of people at different skills or knowledge levels, and with different needs.

Other Training

2.3 Annual Meeting of UK Contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration

Caroline Rouse, the UKCC Administrator, takes the lead on organising this event, with help from other members of the UKCC and a planning group chaired, in 2002, by Phil Wiffen, co-ordinating editor of the Cochrane Pain, Palliative Care & Supportive Care Group. Once again this meeting was held at St Catherine's College, Oxford, with over 200 participants. It consisted of plenary sessions, workshops, clinics and informal meetings. It provides a forum for information exchange, education, and networking. In future, the event will move around the UK, with the 2003 meeting being held at Warwick University.

2.4 Training workshops at the Cochrane Colloquium

The 2002 Cochrane Colloquium was held in Stavanger, Norway. Phil Alderson ran a workshop on small group teaching skills with Sally Green from the Australasian Cochrane Centre. Esther Coren was involved in a workshop on 'Editorial guidelines for reviewing Cochrane protocols and reviews'.

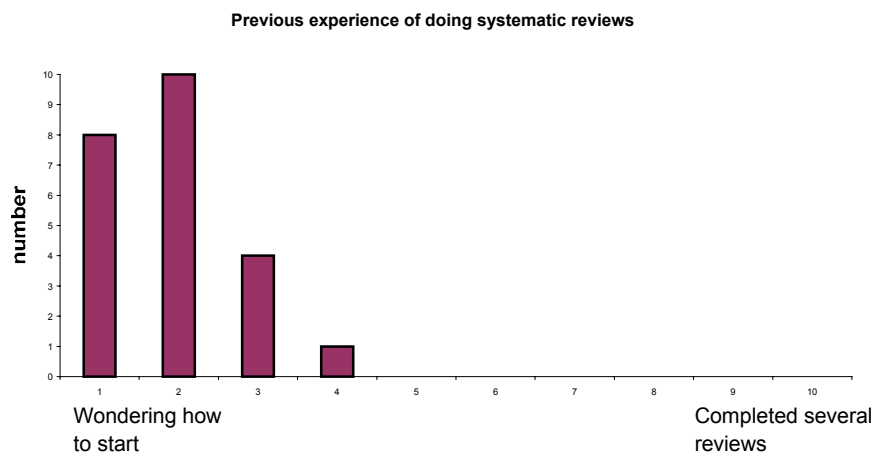
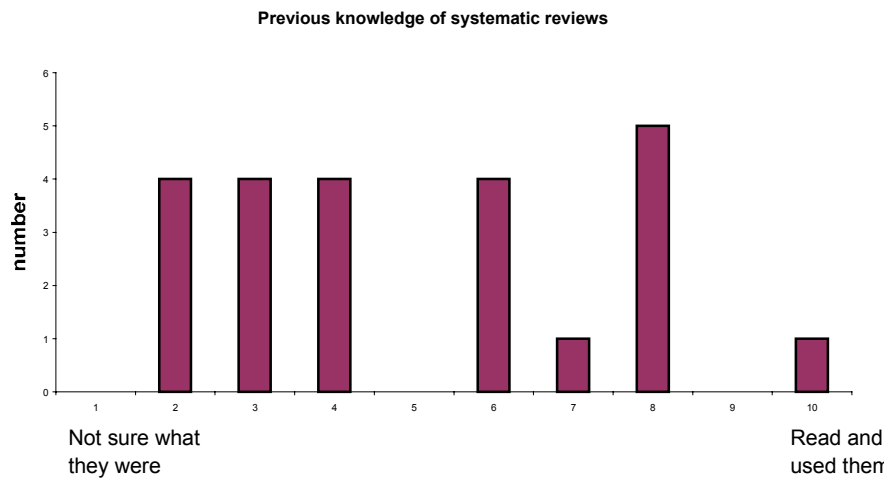
2.5 Introduction to systematic review courses on the island of Ireland

Over the past two years the Health Research Board in Dublin and the R&D Office in Belfast have supported introductory systematic review training. The long-term aim of this is to increase involvement in the Cochrane Collaboration, and ultimately the preparation, maintenance and use of systematic reviews, in both jurisdictions on the island of Ireland.

During 2002, UKCC staff ran four three-day courses, two led by Mike Clarke (in Cork and Galway) and two led by Phil Alderson and Esther Coren (Belfast and Dublin). There was a large demand for the courses, and 56 places were filled with a large reserve list.

Informal evaluation at the end of the workshops suggested they had been well received. We followed this up with a questionnaire survey sent out in December 2002. The response rate was about 40%. The following graphs show the responses to three questions on the feedback form.

Other Training



Participants had a wide range of previous experience of using systematic reviews, but few had undertaken one. The workshop was rated as very helpful. We also asked participants how they intended to use the skills they had gained, and the following table shows the responses from the 23 respondents.

Other Training

Table 10

Activity	Number intending to do this
Doing a Cochrane review	5
Doing a non-Cochrane review	3
Other involvement in the Cochrane Collaboration e.g. consumer, peer reviewer	4
Thinking about doing a systematic review	11
Helping others with research ideas	16
Critical appraisal of literature	20
Assessing applications for funding	5

In addition, one participant reported plans to help others design search strategies for their reviews.

We plan to run four similar courses during 2003.

2.6 Oxford Systematic Review Development Programme (OSRDP)

This programme, led by Jon Deeks at the Centre for Statistics in Medicine in Oxford, offers a training course in systematic reviews. The course is for eight days spread over three blocks, and is one of the few courses available in the UK covering the topic in such depth. This year the UKCC provided the administration for this course, and Phil Alderson and Esther Coren contributed to the teaching. During 2003, the UKCC will organise and deliver the course on behalf of the OSRDP, as Jon Deeks is spending the year working in Australia.

2.7 National Institute for Clinical Excellence Collaborating Centres

Due to the lack of available training in systematic reviews in the UK, NICE approached the UKCC requesting some specific training for members of its National Collaborating Centres. These centres prepare guidelines for NICE.

Phil Alderson and Jon Deeks ran a two-day course, designed in response to the expressed needs of members of the Collaborating Centres, in London in November 2002. The programme is attached as Appendix IV. There was a mix of practical and didactic sessions, and each day finished with an open session where participants could raise any questions of relevance to their work.

Other Training

The topics covered in the open sessions were:

- calculating numbers needed to treat from systematic reviews
- different approaches to setting questions in Collaborating Centres
- diagnostic studies
- statements of no effect and no evidence
- cross-over trials and cluster randomized trials

Phil Alderson also provides methodological advice to one of the Collaborating Centres (the National Collaborating Centre for Nursing and Supportive Care) as a consultant, and is a member of its management board.

2.8 National Blood Service

Phil Alderson also provides some methodological advice to the National Blood Service which has set up a Systematic Reviews Initiative. He is also a member of the steering group for this initiative, which aims to prepare reviews relevant to transfusion medicine.

2.9 The Aubrey Sheiham Cochrane Collaboration Public Health and Primary Care Scholarship

This scholarship enables a Cochrane reviewer from a developing country to spend four months at the UKCC being trained in systematic reviews and working on one or more reviews. The scholar for 2002 was Karin Schioler from Grenada, who is working on reviews of vaccines for Japanese encephalitis and Dengue fever.

2.10 Cochrane Reviewer Training Fellowships on the island of Ireland

These five fellowships, funded by the Health Research Board in Dublin and the Research & Development Office in Belfast, allow people to spend the equivalent of two days per week for a year working on a Cochrane review. The award committee was chaired by Mike Clarke from the UK Cochrane Centre in 2002.

APPENDIX I

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

APPENDIX II

Programme for 'Training the Trainers' 2002

Monday, 21st January 2002

0930	Registration and coffee
1000	UKCC training strategy
1030	Small groups – theory and evidence
1100	Tasks of a facilitator
<i>1130</i>	<i>Break</i>
1145	Handling challenging participants
<i>1300</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
1400	Intro to analysis workshop – background & overview
1430	Introduction to meta-analysis
<i>1515</i>	<i>Break</i>
1530	Practical – eligibility
1630	Close

Tuesday, 22nd January 2002

0930	Parallel sessions – Binary data OR Heterogeneity
<i>1100</i>	<i>Break</i>
1115	Parallel sessions – Continuous data OR Publication bias
<i>1300</i>	<i>Lunch</i>
1400	Practical 2 – data extraction
<i>1515</i>	<i>Break</i>
1530	Progress on distance learning and wrap up
1600	Close

APPENDIX III

Programme for Editorial Development Day 2002

Stream 1 – Trial Search Co-ordinators

Stream 2 – Other members of editorial teams

Quality of Reviews

1000 Coffee

1030 Introductions – aims of the day, structure and overview

1100 Nancy Owens – progress to date and preliminary conclusions

1115 Esther Coren– Overview of common methodological problems

1135 10 min break

1145 Small groups: Implementing change – Esther Coren
Randomised/non-randomised comparisons – Jon Deeks
Assessing trial quality – Phil Alderson

1215 Feedback to large group and discussion
(implementing change/solutions)

1240 Resources and things in the pipeline

1300 Lunch

1400 Updating reviews – whole group
Introduction - Esther Coren

1410 Issues so far and preliminary conclusions – Nancy Owens

1430 Small groups – problems and possible solutions

1500 Large group feedback – problems/solutions

1530 Tea break

1545 Small groups (non-TSCs) – feasibility. Concrete intentions

1635 Feedback from small groups

1645 Expression – Phil Alderson

1700 Conclusions of the day and wind up. Both streams.

1730 End of day

APPENDIX IV

Oxford Systematic Reviews Development Programme/UK Cochrane Centre training for NICE Collaborating Centres 26-27 November 2002

Programme

Day 1

- 09.15 Welcome and introductions
- 09.30 Discussion of similarities and differences between reviews for technology assessment and guidelines - Jon Deeks
- 10:00 Critical appraisal of a review using SIGN checklist
Jon Deeks & Phil Alderson
- 11.00 Break*
- 11.15 Why might systematic reviews disagree?
Phil Alderson
- 11.45 Types of questions in guidelines and selecting studies
Jon Deeks
- 13.00 Lunch*
- 13.45 Quality assessment of randomised studies
Phil Alderson
- 14.45 Quality assessment of non randomised studies
Jon Deeks
- 15.30 Break*
- 15.45 Open session
Jon Deeks & Phil Alderson
- 17.00 Finish

Day 2

- 09.00 Study synthesis, quantitative and qualitative
Jon Deeks
- 10.00 Choosing outcome measures to collect
Phil Alderson
- 10.45 Break*
- 11.00 Heterogeneity
Jon Deeks
- 12.30 Lunch*
- 13.15 Measuring and reporting inter-rater agreement
Jon Deeks
- 13.45 Grading evidence
Phil Alderson
- 14.30 Interpreting a review practical
Jon Deeks & Phil Alderson
- 15.15 Break*
- 15.30 Open session
Jon Deeks & Phil Alderson
- 17.00 Finish

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