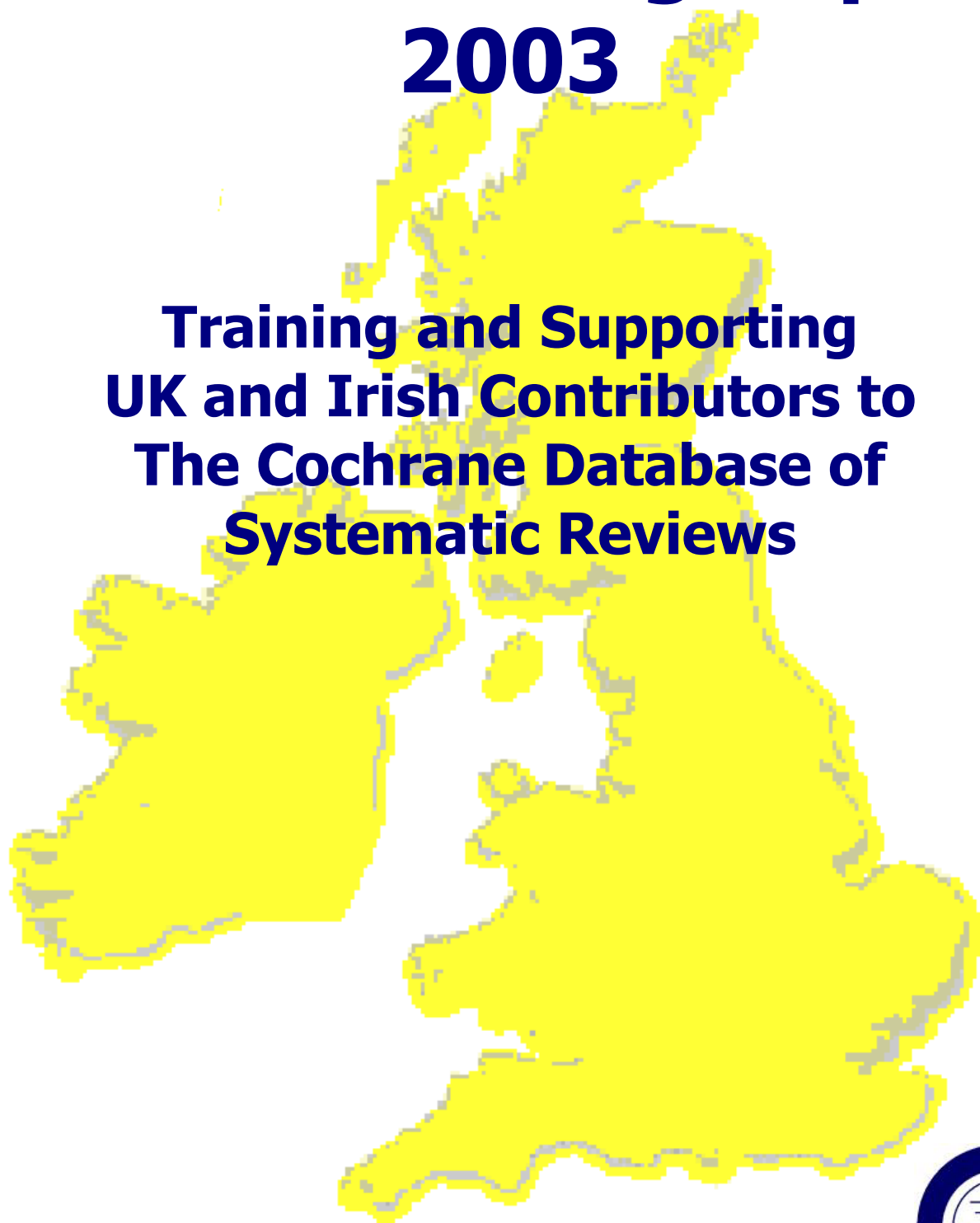


UK Cochrane Centre Annual Training Report 2003

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



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Executive Summary

The 2003 UKCC training programme consisted of:

- Training for reviewers
 - 14 workshops on 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' with 163 participants
 - 12 'Introduction to Analysis' workshops (a new workshop in 2002) with 149 participants
 - a self-directed RevMan exercise
 - the completion and launch of the Cochrane Collaboration Open Learning Material for Reviewers

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

- Four three-day introductory systematic review courses on the island of Ireland with 49 participants

- Involvement in other training and consultancy
 - the Oxford Systematic Review Development Programme eight-day course on systematic reviews
 - advice to the NICE National Collaborating Centre for Nursing and Supportive Care
 - advice to the National Blood Service's Systematic Reviews Initiative
 - advice to the NICE working party revising the guidelines for submissions to NICE
 - the Aubrey Sheiham Cochrane Collaboration Public Health and Primary Care Scholarship.
 - the Cochrane training fellowships on the island of Ireland
 - training for consumers

Introduction

The Cochrane Collaboration continues to grow and expand with a steady stream of new reviewers seeking training in the UK and Ireland as well as globally. The UKCC training programme seeks to develop in response to the needs of contributors in the UK and Ireland. During 2003 the training programmes developed in 2002 were consolidated.

There is still strong demand for training courses with 26 days provided in 2003 and reviewer workshops continue to attract good numbers.

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 2003, UKCC workshops were held in Aberdeen, Belfast, Bristol, Dublin, Liverpool, London, Oxford and York. We held 14 workshops on 'Developing a protocol for a review', and 12 on 'Introduction to Analysis'. In addition, during 2004 we plan to run one set of workshops in Scotland and two sets on the island of Ireland, with the rest located around England and Wales.

1.2 Participants

During 2003, 425 workshop places were filled by 265 participants, some attending more than one workshop. This is an increase of approximately 10% in the number of participants on 2002. The protocol workshop in particular can be tailored to run with up to 14 participants or 21 participants because much of the day is group based work.

During 2003, approximately 94% of the participants were UK based (table 1). Over 91% of participants completed a feedback form.

Table 1 Areas of residence of workshop participants

	97-98 (13 months) n=163	98-99 (13 months) n=235	99-00 (13 months) n=273	2001 n=183	2002 n=236	2003 n= 265
UK	96%	97%	96%	96%	97%	94%
Rest of Europe	2%	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%
Americas and Caribbean	1%	1%	1%	-	1%	1%
Australasia	-	-	-	-	-	1%
Africa	-	-	-	1%	-	-
Asia	-	-	-	1%	-	1%

1.3 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' workshops

This workshop is designed to help new reviewers to clearly define their review title and to describe the intervention , participants and outcomes. It is largely conducted in small group interactive format

In 2003 there was a marked improvement in the basic understanding of participants regarding protocols prior to attending workshops (table 2). This is presumably a reflection of the teaching on evidence based medicine (EBM) in undergraduate and postgraduate training courses.

Wider knowledge of EBM has not however led to an increase in those undertaking reviews prior to attending a workshop (table 3) though the group is self-selecting in that participants have little experience of preparing a review.

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

Rating* of experience	Year (% of Total)					
	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003
1-3	65%	74%	73%	68%	67%	46%
4-7	35%	24%	24%	31%	29%	46%
8-10	1%	2%	3%	1%	3%	8%

*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)					
	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003
1-3	72%	79%	79%	80%	76%	72%
4-7	26%	19%	18%	17%	22%	27%
8-10	2%	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%

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

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

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)					
	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003
1-3	2%	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%
4-7	35%	37%	33%	37%	32%	29%
8-10	64%	61%	66%	63%	68%	70%

* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

Rating of the protocol workshop remains high with 70% allocating a rating in the highest band of 8-10 (table 4). Most participants find the workshops helpful and enjoyable, as in previous years (table 5).

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

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)					
	97-98	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003
1-3	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	3%
4-7	27%	23%	18%	20%	25%	19%
8-10	72%	78%	82%	79%	75%	77%

* 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 to cover some of the issues not currently covered such as search strategies.

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 programme developed in 2002 was delivered largely unchanged during 2003. Some of the topics taught on the analysis day have proved academically challenging for some of the attendees and the material is currently being reassessed.

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).

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

Rating* of experience	Year (% of Total)	
	2002	2003
1-3	62%	60%
4-7	36%	31%
8-10	2%	9%

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

For individual sessions, only a few participants gave a poor rating, with about half the participants giving very good scores for usefulness (Tables 7 and 8). There is some room for improvement compared to the scores in the Protocol workshops. It is probable that low scores are in part related to the complexity

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of some of the material. It should also be noted that a proportion of attendees stay on from the previous day in order to save expense. This is not encouraged as participants who generally have not completed a protocol are unlikely to have sufficient understanding of the data they are likely encounter in their review.

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

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)	
	2002	2003
1-3	1%	2%
4-7	42%	40%
8-10	57%	57%

* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

Table 8 Participants' rating of the helpfulness of individual sessions

Rating* of session	Introduction to meta-analysis		Study eligibility		Binary data		Data extraction	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
1-3	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	5%
4-7	30%	33%	18%	41%	28%	44%	27%	44%
8-10	70%	67%	81%	58%	72%	55%	72%	51%

Rating* of session	Continuous data		Heterogeneity		Publication bias	
	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003
1-3	0%	3%	0%	5%	1%	3%
4-7	23%	47%	18%	43%	20%	37%
8-10	78%	50%	82%	52%	79%	60%

* 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.

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1.5 Output

As in previous years, we have looked at *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)* to see how many of our workshop participants have gone on to publish protocols and reviews. It takes some time for a reviewer to publish a complete review after attending a workshop, as the review will then need to go through many other steps. We estimate that 1170 potential reviewers have been trained since 1994/5 which has led to the production of 604 protocols and 603 reviews in Issue 4 2003 of CDSR. This means that on average each person trained has resulted in either a protocol or review. Approximately 60% of attendees have published at least one review or protocol, some have more than one publication and a few have more than 10 reviews.

1.6 Open Learning Material

The Open Learning Material continues to be freely available on CD from the UK Cochrane Centre or on the web at www.cochrane-net.org/openlearning. It is envisaged that this material will be updated in due course. Approximately 2000 copies of the OL material (in the form of CD's and hard copy) have been sent out to Cochrane entities and other interested parties. There have been over 9000 hits on the open learning website.

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. In the past, training days have been provided for new facilitators but there are now sufficient people available. New facilitators are now being introduced by means of an informal mentoring programme.

2.2 Annual Meeting of UK Contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration, University of Warwick 2003

The workshop programme at the UK Contributors meeting at the University of Warwick was co-ordinated by Esther Coren with a change in the overall programme to accommodate two additional workshop sessions. The workshops were streamed into different levels of experience and also for specific groups of people such as editors. Aspects of this model have been adopted by the Workshops organizing committee for the 2004 Cochrane Colloquium in Ottawa.

2.3 Training workshops at the Cochrane Colloquium

The 2003 Cochrane Colloquium was held in Barcelona, Esther Coren presented a workshop on writing abstracts. Mike Clarke presented a workshop on how the Cochrane Collaboration and Clinical Evidence might work more closely together in supporting reviewers and editors. Sally Hopewell with Clive Adams and Mark Fenton presented a workshop on the software 'Meerkat' for developing specialised trial registers.

Carol Lefebvre conducted 2 training workshops at the Cochrane Colloquium in Barcelona. These were both for Trials Search Co-ordinators (TSCs) of Cochrane Review Groups and Fields; one aimed at beginners and one for advanced TSCs.

A range of topics covering various aspects of trial identification and registers of trials was covered in each workshop.

2.4 Introduction to systematic review courses on the island of Ireland

Over the past three years the Health Research Board in Dublin and the R&D Office in Belfast have supported introductory systematic review training on the island of Ireland. 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.

During 2003, UKCC staff ran four three-day courses in Sligo, Dublin, Cork and Belfast. There were 49 participants in total. Demand for the courses continues

Other Training

at a high level and five courses will be run in 2004.

2.5 National Blood Service's Systematic Reviews Initiative

Phil Alderson provides occasional support to the National Blood Service's Systematic Reviews Initiative, mainly consisting of methodological advice.

2.6 Oxford Systematic Review Development Programme (OSRDP)

This course has traditionally been led by Jon Deeks of the Centre for Statistics in Medicine, in collaboration with the UK Cochrane Centre. During 2003, Jon was working in Australia and it was therefore agreed that the UK Cochrane Centre would take the lead. Esther Coren took responsibility for managing the course, and Nicola Thornton provided administrative and organisational support.

The course was restructured from three blocks into two, to reduce repetition, and streamline the teaching load. The programme was re-worked and the reading lists updated. Participants attended from a range of backgrounds. Overall, the feedback was favourable and the participants reported both formally and informally that this was a beneficial learning experience for them. In particular, participants commented that the length of the course was appropriate, indicating that the shift to two blocks was acceptable, and that the course content was interesting and well balanced. 16 delegates attended from 5 countries (12 UK (1 N.Ireland), 1 Brazil, 1 Ireland, 1 Nigeria (Sheiham scholar) & 1 USA).

2.7 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. In 2003 Dr Mansur M Rabi, a Consultant Ophthalmologist from Nigeria was awarded the scholarship. His review title was: Environmental sanitary interventions for the prevention of active trachoma. He has 2 other published protocols: Face washing promotion for preventing active trachoma and Interventions for trachoma trichiasis

2.8 Cochrane Reviewer Training Fellowships on the island of Ireland

Other Training

Five fellowships, funded by the Health Research Board in Dublin and the Research & Development Office in Belfast were awarded in 2003 to allow people to spend the equivalent of two days per week for a year working on a Cochrane review. Mike Clarke chaired the selection panel again. These add to the five fellows who were appointed in 2003.

2.9 Cochrane UK Consumer Training 2003

The Cochrane UK Consumer Group received funding from the UK Cochrane Centre to run two consumer training days from April 2003 – March 2004. The workshops were titled 'Commenting on Cochrane reviews from a consumer perspective' and the first was held at the Kings Fund Centre, London on 17 September 2003. The workshop focused on: different ways of testing whether health treatments work; assessing the quality of research on health care interventions; looking at what information consumers want from research; assessing a Cochrane review from the consumer perspective; and understanding the importance of evidence-based care and evidence-based information. Consumers contributed to commenting on a Cochrane review which was being updated and was going through the editorial process at the time. The collated consumer comments from the day were forwarded to the review group and onto the reviewers. Participants were mainly new consumers but also included some who had contributed to commenting on protocols and reviews before. The evaluation of the day was positive, with consumers valuing the opportunity to meet and network as well as learn new skills. One consumer commented: "Great workshop: you gave us such a surefooted lead through what could have been hard going." The second workshop took place in Edinburgh in March 2004. The workshop was led by Gill Gyte with help from Rosemary Humphreys, Amy Godfrey-Arkle and Anne Hester who contributed as small group facilitators.

In addition, consumers ran training workshops at the Cochrane UK Contributors Meeting in Warwick in March 2003 on "Explaining systematic reviews to patients and other consumers" and "Giving constructive feedback". UK consumers also contributed to two training workshops at the Colloquium in Barcelona on "Making sense of scientific evidence: a workshop for consumers and people collaborating with consumers" .

3 Future Plans

The Department of Health's Quinquennial Review of the UKCC in the last quarter of 2003 strongly endorsed the key role of the UKCC in delivering training and support to contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration in the UK. It also stated 'We felt strongly that the Training Budget should be more imaginatively and effectively used, particularly for the benefit of the Cochrane Review Groups' staff'.

In view of this guidance we are planning to continue with our extensive programme of training for reviewers but also to introduce some changes during 2004. We hope to introduce training in peer review in partnership with a major medical journal, to increase the capacity for and quality of peer review. Plans are well developed for editor training and to identify the variety of training needs for the core staff of CRGs. We will liaise with other Cochrane Centres in identifying those needs. In addition we are looking to provide some training via a virtual learning environment. This will release time on reviewer training days and enable new material to be covered.

Finally we aim to run one study programme this year on study designs such as controlled before and after studies and interrupted time series studies, which are used in, for example, Cochrane reviews undertaken by the Effective Practice and Organisation of Care Collaborative Review Group (EPOC).

Acknowledgments

Sarahjayne Sierra is responsible for the administrative support of workshops and is taking over the organisation for the Ireland based courses from Nicola Thornton.

In 2003, Nicola Thornton coordinated facilitator training and the SRDP. She has also been actively involved in organising the Annual Meeting for UK Contributors to The Cochrane Collaboration, helping with the Cochrane Reviewers Handbook programme, and with the production of the Open Learning Material, running the Sheiham Scholarship, and helping to pilot some consumer training with Gill Gyte.

Phil Alderson stepped down from responsibility for running the training programme in October 2003 in order to study for an MSc in medical statistics. Phil Wiffen took on this role in November 2003.

Our main source of funding remains the NHS R&D Programme, with funding coming from Ireland for the development programmes run there.

Members of the Cochrane Statistical Methods Group 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.

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

Ali Bab Akbari, Lisa Askie, Anne-Marie Bagnall, Paul Beirne, Sally Bell-Syer, Judy Bradley, Michelle Briggs, Mike Clarke, June Cody, Mandy Collingwood, Dominique Crowley, Nicky Cullum, Jane Dennis, Rumona Dickson, Phil Edwards, Frances Fairman, Mark Fenton, Kate Flemming, Lesley Gillespie, Anne-Marie Glenny, Gill Gyte, Kate Hey, Julian Higgins, Sally Hollis, Sally Hopewell, Kate Jewitt, Toby Lasserson, Jan Lilleyman, Heather Maxwell, Emma McCall, Stephen Milan, Tess Moore, Andrea Nelson, Richmal Oates-Whitehead, Susan O'Meara, Lois Orton, Rafael Perera, Jo Picot, Lindsay Stead.



Phil Wiffen
Training Director
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Appendix I

Programme for 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' workshop

09.30	Coffee and registrations
10.00	Welcome and Introduction
10.10	Format of a Cochrane Review
10.45	Small group discussion on developing a protocol for a review
13.00	<i>Lunch</i> <i>(The Cochrane Library is available during lunch break)</i>
13.50	Demonstration of a completed Protocol on RevMan
14.05	Small group discussion on developing a protocol for a review - continued
16.00	<i>Tea and close of workshop</i>

Appendix II

Programme for 'Introduction to Analysis' workshop

09.00	<i>Welcome and refreshments</i>
09.15	Introduction to meta-analysis
10.00	Applying eligibility criteria (practical)
11.00	<i>Break</i>
11.15	Binary data: summary statistics and choosing an effect measure
12.00	Continuous data
13.00	<i>Lunch</i>
13.45	Extracting data (practical)
14.45	Break
15.00	Heterogeneity – causes and investigation
15.45	Publication bias – causes and detection
16.30	<i>Close of workshop</i>

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

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