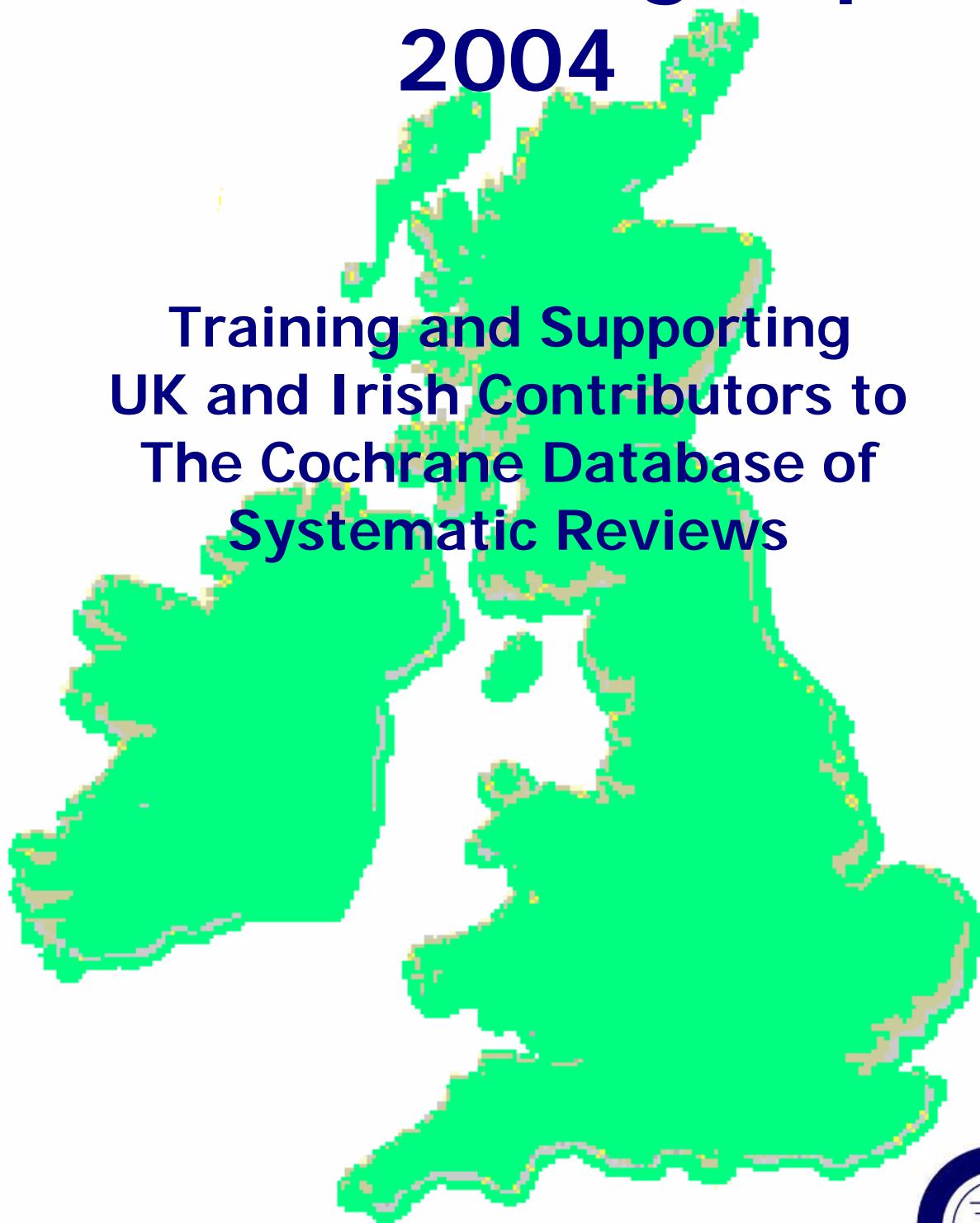


# **UK Cochrane Centre Annual Training Report 2004**

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



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# Executive Summary

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The 2004 UKCC training programme consisted of:

- Training for reviewers
  - Nine workshops on 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' with 121 participants
  - Eight 'Introduction to Analysis' workshops with 91 participants
  - a self-directed RevMan exercise
  - on-going support for the Cochrane Collaboration Open Learning Material for reviewers
  - a Review Completion Course
  
- The 9th Annual Meeting of UK and Irish Contributors to The Cochrane Collaboration for over 200 people with 38 training workshops provided
  
- Five three-day introductory systematic review courses on the island of Ireland with 63 participants in total
  
- A new workshop for UK based Cochrane Editors
  
- Training for the staff of the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) at introductory and intermediate levels
  
- Cochrane training fellowships on the island of Ireland with planned mentoring from the training team
  
- Involvement in other training and consultancy
  - the Aubrey Sheiham Cochrane Collaboration Public Health and Primary Care Scholarship
  - training for consumers
  - 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

# **Introduction**

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In 2004 the protocol and analysis workshops were continued as a tried and tested model. A 'Training for Editors' workshop was introduced and successfully delivered in July. Planning for peer review training and a two-day protocol workshop was taken forward for delivery in 2005.

There is still strong demand for training courses with 42 days provided in 2004, a major increase over previous years.

This report does not cover the training and support that UKCC staff provide to those in Collaborative 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.

## **The training team in 2004**

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- Phil Wiffen, Training Director, three days per week.
- Esther Coren, Lecturer in Systematic Reviews, two and a half days per week.
- Nicola McDowell (formerly Thornton), Training Co-ordinator, four days per week.
- Nancy Owens, Facilitator for Collaborative Review Group (CRG) staff, approximately one day per week.
- Lisa Horwill, PA to training team, full time.

# 1 Cochrane Reviewer Training

## 1.1 Workshops

Throughout 2004, UKCC workshops were held in Bristol, Dundee, Liverpool, London, Oxford and York. We held nine 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' and eight 'Introduction to Analysis' workshops.

## 1.2 Participants

There were 261 workshop places available in 2004 these were filled by 212 participants (121, 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' and 91, 'Introduction to Analysis'). This is a decrease of approximately 20% in the number of participants from 2003.

Approximately 98% of the participants attending workshops in 2004 were UK-based (*Table 1*). 99% of participants completed a feedback form.

**Table 1** Areas of residence of workshop participants

	98-99 (13 months) n=235	99-00 (13 months) n=273	2001 n=183	2002 n=236	2003 n= 265	2004 n=212
UK	97%	96%	96%	97%	94%	98%
Rest of Europe	2%	3%	2%	1%	3%	2%
Americas and Caribbean	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 define their review title clearly and to describe the intervention, participants and outcomes. It is largely conducted in small group interactive format and has become a proven and established model. In September 2004 the programme was amended to increase the RevMan session from 15 to 45 minutes. The aim of the longer RevMan session is to give a brief introduction to RevMan and some hints and tips to get reviewers underway with a protocol. For 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' programmes see Appendix I (pre September 2004) and Appendix II (post September 2004).

In 2004 there was a decrease in the basic understanding of participants compared to 2003 regarding protocols prior to attending workshops (*Table 2*). The workshops are continuing to attract first time reviewers as 79% of participants rated their experience in the lowest band of 1-3 (*Table 3*).

# Cochrane Reviewer Training

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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)					
	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003	2004
1-3	74%	73%	68%	67%	46%	75%
4-7	24%	24%	31%	29%	46%	23%
8-10	2%	3%	1%	3%	8%	2%

\*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)					
	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003	2004
1-3	79%	79%	80%	76%	72%	79%
4-7	19%	18%	17%	22%	27%	18%
8-10	2%	3%	3%	2%	1%	3%

\* 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)					
	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003	2004
1-3	2%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
4-7	37%	33%	37%	32%	29%	26%
8-10	61%	66%	63%	68%	70%	74%

\* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

# Cochrane Reviewer Training

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There has been an increase in the highest rating of the protocol workshop since 2003, 74% allocated a rating in the highest band of 8-10 (*Table 4*). This perhaps reflects the changes in the program to match participants needs, thus making the workshop increasingly helpful to participants.

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

Rating* of workshop	Year (% of Total)					
	98-99	99-00	2001	2002	2003	2004
1-3	0%	0%	1%	1%	3%	0%
4-7	23%	18%	20%	25%	19%	13%
8-10	78%	82%	79%	75%	77%	87%

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

As in previous years most participants find the discussion group section of the workshop enjoyable (*Table 5*).

Qualitative comments from participants were generally very positive. Participants find it useful to have the opportunity to discuss their protocol whilst learning from others. Participants commented on how helpful and experienced the facilitators were. Many participants thought that a longer RevMan session should be incorporated. In response to these comments the protocol programme changed in September, as described above. Participants also suggested that the workshop be increased in time and that it should cover some of the issues not currently covered such as search strategies and methodology. The opportunity should also be provided for participants to work 'hands on' with RevMan and on their own protocol. We plan to develop and run a two-day 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' workshop in 2005 which will cover these issues.

## 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. A sample programme is attached as Appendix III. The programme, developed in 2002, was delivered with some changes to content during 2004. Some of the topics taught on the 'Introduction to Analysis' workshop have proved academically challenging for some of the attendees and the material is constantly reassessed.

# Cochrane Reviewer Training

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

Rating* of experience	Year (% of Total)		
	2002	2003	2004
1-3	62%	60%	70%
4-7	36%	31%	27%
8-10	2%	9%	3%

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

The majority of attendees have little previous experience of undertaking systematic reviews (*Table 6*).

**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	2004
1-3	1%	2%	0%
4-7	42%	40%	30%
8-10	57%	58%	70%

\* 1 = outstandingly unhelpful, 10 = outstandingly helpful

There was a significant increase of 13% between 2003 and 2004 in participants rating the workshop in the highest banding 8-10 for the overall helpfulness in terms of what they learnt (*Table 7*)

# Cochrane Reviewer Training

**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	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004
1-3	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	5%	1%
4-7	30%	33%	37%	18%	41%	34%	28%	44%	34%	27%	44%	38%
8-10	70%	67%	63%	81%	58%	66%	72%	55%	66%	72%	51%	61%
Rating* of session	Continuous data			Heterogeneity			Publication bias					
	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004	2002	2003	2004			
1-3	0%	3%	2%	0%	5%	2%	1%	3%	3%			
4-7	23%	47%	50%	18%	43%	38%	20%	37%	33%			
8-10	77%	50%	48%	82%	52%	60%	79%	60%	64%			

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

The percentage of participants rating the helpfulness of the individual sessions (Table 8) in the highest band (8-10) increased from 2003 to 2004 except for the sessions 'Introduction to Meta-Analysis' and 'Continuous data' which both decreased slightly. These sessions are under continuous review as they are the most challenging for attendees. The percentage of participants rating helpfulness of the individual sessions as the lowest band (1-3) is very small, which shows that each session in the programme is worthwhile to participants.

The majority of the qualitative comments are good: participants commented that the facilitators are experienced, knowledgeable and approachable. Many found the practical exercises useful, as was the opportunity for open discussion and to ask questions. Some participants thought that more practical sessions should be included in the day and that too much material is covered in the limited time. To increase the mix of lecture and practical sessions the publication bias material was changed in the latter part of the year so that it can be run as a practical or lecture format depending on facilitator experience. This action has increased the number of practical sessions during workshops. Many people thought that it would be helpful to have a searching session, a 'hands on' session on how to enter data into RevMan, and an opportunity to work on their own protocol. These issues will be incorporated into the two-day 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' programme planned for 2005.

# Cochrane Reviewer Training

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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 1269 potential reviewers have been trained since 1994/5 which has led to the production of 661 protocols and 898 reviews in Issue 2 2005 of *CDSR*. This means that on average each person trained has produced either a protocol or a review.

## 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](http://www.cochrane-net.org/openlearning).

Approximately 2000 copies of the Open Learning 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 17000 hits on the open learning website. This material is now becoming outdated and needs to be revised in line with changes made in the Cochrane Reviewers' Handbook.

## 1.7 Review Completion Course

A successful Review Completion Course was run in October 2004 for six reviewers who had experienced difficulty in completing their reviews. The aim of the course is to provide a week's opportunity for reviewers to spend dedicated time working on their reviews and have access to help with RevMan, statistics and searching. This is an intensive week but it has been successful in moving people forward. By the end of this course, four of the participants had completed their reviews sufficiently for them to be submitted for peer review.

## 2 Other Training

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### 2.1 Editor training

In July 2004, we piloted a new two-day workshop on editor training, as part of the initiative to develop and provide training to the editorial staff of Collaborative Review Groups. The workshop was run with assistance from Sally Hughes of Oxford Brookes University and involved nine participants. The feedback enabled us to make some changes for the 2005 workshops.

### 2.2 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of UK and Irish Contributors to The Cochrane Collaboration, Edinburgh 2004

In March 2004, 38 training workshops were offered to participants at the Annual Meeting for UK and Irish Contributors to The Cochrane Collaboration. Since 2003, there has been an increased focus on training during this event, which has been well received. The workshop programme in Edinburgh was co-ordinated by Esther Coren and Nicola McDowell. This used the same structure as the workshop programme in Warwick in 2003, with workshops organised into six streams to accommodate beginners and advanced levels of training, and also training for specific groups e.g. editors.

### 2.3 Training workshops at the Cochrane Colloquium

The 2004 Cochrane Colloquium was held in Ottawa. Five workshops were run involving UKCC staff. These are described below:

#### **Minimising your own biases: a workshop for EBM enthusiasts**

The workshop involved small group discussion of four dilemmas that might face reviewers or those editing or commissioning their work. The participants suggested ways in which these dilemmas could be tackled, in order to minimise bias. The participants decided that a discussion paper should be prepared, perhaps for submission to a journal, describing the dilemmas and possible actions and all agreed to comment on this. Seven people attended.

#### **Peer reviewing systematic reviews**

The session contained a paper for review which was doctored to have a number of errors. Working in small groups, attendees were asked to evaluate the document and to feed back. There was then a presentation of key issues around the peer review process. The session was planned for novice peer reviewers but those attending were mixed in terms of experience with some very experienced peer reviewers. Sixteen people attended.

## **Other Training**

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### **Training the trainers: Developing a common language in qualitative research. Sharing training needs and experiences.**

This was a closed workshop aimed at contributors with experience of incorporating qualitative evidence into systematic reviews. A useful discussion took place covering relevant issues. The workshop concluded with a plan to submit an abstract for a workshop at the next Colloquium, where participants would be invited to critically appraise reviews that have incorporated qualitative data as an initial training event in this field. Ten people attended.

Two workshops were run for Trials Search Co-ordinators (TSCs) of Collaborative Review Groups and Fields; one aimed at intermediate level and one for advanced TSCs. At the beginning of each workshop, participants proposed the topics they wished to discuss and this included a wide range of issues relating to trial identification and trials registers.

## **2.4 Introduction to systematic review courses on the island of Ireland**

Over the past four years the Health Research Board in Dublin and the Research and Development 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 2004, UKCC staff ran five three-day courses in Limerick, Dublin, Cork and Belfast. There were 63 participants in total. Demand for the courses continued at a high level and a one-day introduction course was provided in Belfast for 20 participants. Discussions were initiated in 2004 regarding the future design of the courses to meet the growing demand.

## **2.5 National Blood Service's Systematic Reviews Initiative**

Phil Alderson provided occasional support to the National Blood Service's Systematic Reviews Initiative, mainly consisting of methodological advice. This continued until Phil left the Centre in late 2004.

## **Other Training**

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### **2.6 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 timing of the 2004 scholarship was changed to a May - August block. This makes the visit to the UK more comfortable for those who travel from warmer climates. The scholarship was therefore moved from late 2004 to early 2005.

### **2.7 Cochrane Reviewer Training Fellowships on the island of Ireland**

A further five fellowships, funded by the Health Research Board in Dublin and the Research and Development Office in Belfast were awarded in 2004 to allow people to spend up to the equivalent of two days per week for a year working on a Cochrane review. Once again Mike Clarke chaired the selection panel. These add to the five fellows who were appointed in 2003. Additional input and mentoring is being undertaken by the UKCC training team for this intake. An additional training day specifically for the 2004 fellows was held in Belfast in September 2004.

### **2.8 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 workshop 'Commenting on Cochrane Reviews from a Consumer Perspective' was held in London in September 2003 and reported in the 2003 training report. The second workshop was held immediately prior to the UK and Irish Contributors' meeting, at the Heriot-Watt University Conference Centre, Edinburgh on 24/25 March 2004. This workshop was attended by 19 consumers, and 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;
- understanding the importance of evidence-based care and evidence-based information.

Consumers contributed to commenting on a Cochrane review which was being updated and going through the editorial process at the time. The collated consumer comments from the day were forwarded to the relevant review group and to the reviewers. Participants were made up of consumers who had contributed to commenting on protocols and reviews previously, and consumers who were new, or relatively new, to the task.

The evaluation of the day was positive, with consumers valuing the opportunity

## Other Training

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to meet and network as well as learn new skills. One consumer commented: "From an experienced consumer, a very informative and stimulating training course. So much to learn." Consumers valued the workshop being held across two half days as this gave them more time to assimilate the information and provided an opportunity to network in the evening. The workshop was led by Gill Gyte with help from Rosemary Humphreys, Maxine Whitton and Nadine Edwards.

Consumers also ran a training workshop at the Cochrane UK and Irish Contributors' Meeting in Edinburgh in March 2004 on 'Giving constructive feedback'. UK consumers contributed to two training workshops at the Colloquium in Ottawa in October 2004 on 'Making sense of scientific evidence: a workshop for consumers and people collaborating with consumers' and 'Mediation skills'.

### **2.9 Training for staff at the National Institute for Clinical Excellence**

Following a request from NICE, and early meetings to define the scope of training, two training courses were run during 2004 for staff at National Collaborating Centres. The first, held in September was an introductory course, and the second held in November was a course at an intermediate level.

Overall the courses were well received, and further courses are planned for 2005. The feedback from the 2004 courses has been used to plan future courses.

### **2.10 National electronic Library for Health (NeLH)**

A presentation was given by Mike Clarke followed by general discussion with 10-15 of the librarians who work on the specialised libraries that are being established within the NeLH. The presentation described the structure, evolution and current status of The Cochrane Collaboration, including the role of Collaborative Review Groups. It was also an opportunity to outline the processes involved in preparing and maintaining a systematic review of healthcare interventions (including searching, meta-analyses and updating). The session ended with discussion of *The Cochrane Library* and its transition to a new interface and structure in Wiley InterScience.

### 3 Future Plans

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The increased training activity will be maintained during 2005 with plans to increase staff available for training. Workshops for Co-ordinating Editors and others for Review Group Co-ordinators are currently at an advanced stage of planning.

The training for editors and a two-day 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' workshop will be consolidated alongside a busy programme of 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' and 'Introduction to Analysis' workshops. Training for peer reviewers is still in the planning stage; with a joint project linked to a major medical journal would seem to be the best option.

We still hope to run one study programme 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).

The UK Cochrane Centre is hosting the 2006 Colloquium in Dublin so planning is about to start which will involve the whole of the training team.

## Acknowledgments

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Lisa Horwill is responsible for the administrative support of all the workshops.

Nicola McDowell has been actively involved in organising the Annual Meeting for UK and Irish 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 with consumer training with Gill Gyte.

Nancy Owens has taken on responsibility for the training of Collaborative Review Groups staff and has helped extensively with Editor training.

Our main source of funding remains the NHS Research and Development Programme, with funding coming from the island of Ireland for the development programmes run there.

Members of the Cochrane Statistical Methods Group have been very helpful 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 could not deliver our training without the help of many facilitators, to whom we are very grateful:

Phil Alderson, Charlotte Archibald, Lisa Askie, Anne-Marie Bagnall, Paul Beirne, Sally Bell-Syer, Michelle Briggs, Mike Clarke, June Cody, Jane Dennis, Frances Fairman, Mark Fenton, Lesley Gillespie, Anne-Marie Glenny, Gill Gyte, Kate Hey, Sally Hopewell, Kate Jewitt, Toby Lasserson, Jan Lilleyman, Heather Maxwell, Stephen Milan, Ian Needleman, Andrea Nelson, Rafael Perera, Tracey Remington and Lindsay Stead.



Phil Wiffen  
Training Director  
July 2005

## Appendix I

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### Programme for 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' Workshop (pre September 2004)

- 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      *Lunch*  
*(The Cochrane Library is available during lunch break)*
- 13.50      Demonstration of a completed Protocol on RevMan
- 14.05      Small group discussion on developing a protocol for a review -  
continued
- 16.00      *Tea and close of workshop*

## Appendix II

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### Programme for 'Developing a Protocol for a Review' Workshop (post September 2004)

09.30	Coffee and registration
10.00	Welcome and Introduction
10.10	Format of a Cochrane Review
10.45	Small group discussion on developing a protocol for a review
12.30	Lunch (The Cochrane Library will be available during Lunch Break)
13.20	Demonstration of a completed Protocol on RevMan
14:05	Small group discussion on developing a protocol for a review - continued
16.00	Close of workshop

## Appendix III

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### Programme for 'Introduction to Analysis' Workshop

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



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