

MeerKat features

Key features of MeerKat

MeerKat is a bibliographic management software package developed by Update Software for the Cochrane Collaboration. It has been developed for individual Review Groups to organise and maintain their specialised register of studies for possible inclusion in systematic reviews carried out by those groups. It:

- Links citations to reports of studies, thus helping cut across salami publishing
- Links reviewers and their reviews to citations and studies
- Helps track citations and study details sent to reviewers
- Will export to CENTRAL at the touch of ONE, yes ONE, button
- Imports your existing register, and, once in MeerKat, duplicate checking is excellent

Managing a register of studies

MeerKat is designed to manage a register of studies, rather than a register of study publications or references. It allows each study to have more than one associated publication or report, and to be in more than one review.

Cochrane Review Groups have to deal with at least four different categories of record and MeerKat can organise studies into those:

- Awaiting assessment
- That the Group decides fall within their scope (and, therefore, constitute their specialized register)
- That the Group considers to be of possible relevance to other Groups but not relevant to them
- That the Group considers to be of no possible relevance to any existing or future Cochrane Review Group (e.g., because they do not report a study and were retrieved in error)

Reference Handling

A study may generate numerous individual references, from the notification and registration of a planned and ongoing trial, through to the publication of the preliminary and final results, and on to possible follow-up reports. Managing all these references, identifying which studies they correspond to, and keeping track of which reviewers have seen them, are just some of the ways that MeerKat can help with managing a specialized register that contains information on both references and studies.

Searching

MeerKat allows:

- The searching of specified fields
- The combination of search terms with AND, OR and NOT
- The use of wildcards
- The saving and rerunning of search strategies

Reports

MeerKat can produce tables containing aggregate information for many of the fields within the register, using information in any of these fields to restrict the records retrieved. The following default reports are available to produce tables that show the number of studies or references:

- In the specialized register
- Assigned to a particular topic, intervention or participants/health condition code
- Assigned to a particular review or reviewer
- Submitted to CENTRAL

Pick lists

MeerKat allows commonly used terms to be entered in pick lists. Terms can then be chosen from the list when entering information. Any changes made to terms in the pick list are reflected in all the records to which that term has been assigned.

Import

- Imported references are put into a temporary holding table first, to help users avoid adding unwanted records straight into the database
- The user can decide which references should be added to the main database
- Duplicate checking can be done while records are being imported
- Records for studies can be created automatically for each reference as they are added to the main database

Export

- A set of records selected by a search can be exported
- A file containing all the references in the main database can be exported
- A submission file for sending references to CENTRAL can be created

Merge studies

Two studies can be merged easily and quickly into a single study

Incorporating the topic list, and reviewer information maintained in ModMan 4.0

MeerKat can import the topic list and lists of reviewers that are maintained in ModMan. It will indicate any changes that have been made to these details that would impact on the records already in the register.

PDF function

A reference record can also be linked to an external source such as a PDF file. User instructions can be found in the MeerKat program folder.

Add features you want by developing your own applications

MeerKat is built using Microsoft Access. Those who know how to use Access can write their own applications (such as new forms, action queries, new reports, new Visual Basic functions) to display and manipulate the data held in a MeerKat register. The Cochrane Schizophrenia Group, for example, has developed Full Text Finder ("Ferret") that links their register data to a database of library holdings. MeerKat users can download Full Text Finder directly from this website.