



COCHRANE NEUROLOGICAL NETWORK

Perugia - Italy

NEWSLETTER

JULY - AUGUST 2008

CNN "UMBRELLA" WORKSHOP 2008: MENINGITIS



A Cochrane Neurological Network Workshop

Milan, Italy - Niguarda Cà Grande Hospital

One of the principal objectives of the Cochrane Neurological Network is to act as a "bridge" between the Cochrane Collaboration and health professionals working in a neurological context.

One way to achieve this objective is through the organization of multidisciplinary workshops *on single neurological topics* to discuss all the specific reviews published in the Cochrane Library. The workshops offer a special setting for Cochrane review experts and clinicians as well as health care professionals, some of them with special expertise in the topic selected.

Within this framework the Cochrane Neurological Network organized a multidisciplinary workshop on "Meningitis", held in Milan at the Niguarda Cà Grande Hospital, in January 2008. Repeating the model of workshops organized in past years, the opportunity to promote debate between clinicians and experts in Cochrane systematic reviews on "burning" topics was offered.

250 people participated to the workshop (neurologists, infectious disease specialists, paediatricians, in-patient and out-patient nurses and health assistants), receiving continuing education accreditation.

In the first part of the workshop attention was focused on the prevention and prophylaxis of meningitis, with the intervention of health policy makers, vaccine experts and paediatricians, who presented and commented on the following systematic reviews:

- Polysaccharide vaccines for preventing serogroup A meningitis

gococcal meningitis

- Conjugate vaccines for preventing meningococcal C meningitis and septicaemia

- Antibiotic prophylaxis for preventing meningitis in patients with basilar skull fractures.

In the second part, dedicated to diagnosis and treatment, the diagnostic-therapeutic protocol of a large hospital (Niguarda Cà Grande) was illustrated, followed by the points of view of emergency room doctors, neurologists, infectious disease specialists, paediatricians and laboratory doctors.

The Cochrane systematic reviews chosen and commented on were:

- Corticosteroids for acute bacterial meningitis

- Fluid therapy for acute bacterial meningitis

- Third generation cephalosporins versus conventional antibiotics for treating acute bacterial meningitis.



The closing keynote presentation of the day was given by Kameshwar Prasad, reviewer of the Cochrane Collaboration and renowned neurologist, who spoke about "Meningitis from evidence to practice: the experience of developing countries".

The Cochrane Neurological Network is planning to initiate smaller satellite meetings of this workshop in different regional contexts.

To consult presentations given at the workshop please see:
<http://www.cochraneneuronet.org/en/events.html>

A new initiative between the European Association of Young Neurologists and Trainees and the Cochrane Neurological Network.

Early this summer the Cochrane Neurological Network was contacted by the European Association of Young Neurologists and Trainees (YNT) with a proposal to establish collaboration between the two organizations. The aim of the collaboration is to improve the knowledge of evidence-based practices among young neurologists and neurologists in training. The YNT is represented in this activity by Dr. Laszlo Sztrihai in Szeged, Hungary. Dr. Sztrihai is a grant winner from the *Series of Training Workshops* organized by the Cochrane Neurological Network and the University of Milan, funded by the European Union, Marie Curie Conferences and Training Courses Actions Project: *Teaching Evidence-Based Neurology in Europe: Cochrane Systematic Reviews in Practice* (2005-2006).

At the most recent executive meeting of the Neurological Network

some ideas to initiate collaboration were formulated, among these the planning of future events to be organized together with the YNT, similar to the conferences and workshops that the Cochrane Neurological Network regularly organizes on single neurological topics (e.g. meningitis, subarachnoid hemorrhage, carpal tunnel syndrome, etc.), where Cochrane Systematic Reviews are presented together with clinical and epidemiological views and experiences.

Others could be key-note presentations by Cochrane-affiliated lecturers to be given during future YNT meetings, inclusive of YNT sessions at the annual Danube meetings.

We are very pleased to be working toward the establishment of a lasting relationship between the two organizations and invite readers to offer suggestions and follow developments.

OUR AIM: to establish an information channel between Cochrane Neurological review groups and health care professionals working in the field of neurological diseases.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE JNNP COCHRANE NEUROLOGICAL NETWORK CORNER FIND OUT WHAT'S GOING ON



Since publication of the opening editorial (M.G. Celani, P. Sandercock, G. Hankey) "The Cochrane Neurological Network Corner, *J. Neurol. Neurosurg. Psychiatry*, Jan 2008; 79", three reviews have appeared in the journal, with the specific aim of introducing and increasing JNNP reader knowledge to the synthesis of results from clinical trials, providing credible and objective support to guide medical behaviour in a specific subject, the summaries published to date are:

Systematic review: blood pressure lowering in patients without prior cerebrovascular disease for prevention of cognitive impairment and dementia (B McGuinness, S Todd, A P Passmore, and R Bullock), *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* January 2008; 79: 4-5. doi:10.1136/jnnp.2007.118505.

Multidisciplinary rehabilitation for adults with multiple sclerosis (F Khan, L Turner-Stokes, L Ng, and T Kilpatrick), *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* February 2008; 79: 114. doi:10.1136/jnnp.2007.127563.

Creatine treatment in muscle disorders: a meta-analysis of randomised controlled trials (R A Kley, M A Tarnopolsky, and M Vorgerd), *J Neurol Neurosurg Psychiatry* April 2008; 79: 366-367. doi:10.1136/jnnp.2007.127571.

The work of many people helps to sustain these three pages in the JNNP Journal: two neurologists select all the neurological titles from each new issue of the Cochrane Library (both in the new and in the updated sections) and divide them into lists of diseases covered by the Cochrane Neurological Network (CNN). Three neurologists, part of the JNNP-CNN editorial board, select the titles and summaries from this list (published on the CNN website) and grade them using five criteria: practical interest, clinical relevance, methodological quality, robustness of the findings, generality and substantial change of practice. Appealing reviews for a multidisciplinary reading audience are given priority. Review authors are then invited to submit a summary of their published review using a structured abstract. The editorial board publishes the text and figures, making a single page summary article in the "Cochrane Neurological Network Corner" section. Please visit the JNNP website and see for yourself! We are keen to have your suggestions and feedback.

Only 1 selected review was not accepted, the editorial board asked the Author to submit a revised piece for the JNNP Corner based on an updated review, as there were some new trials to include.

The big news resulting from the JNNP Editorial Meeting on Monday 23rd June 2008 in London, is that the proposal for a corner commentary was accepted! It will run alongside the summary of the review.

The aim of the Corner is to enable authors to maintain the very carefully crafted wording and structure of the abstract of the Cochrane review and allow editors to clarify and comment on specific aspects of the selected review. These may be methodological, statistical or disease related and they are strictly review-specific.

This short commentary should improve the reader's evaluation of the evidence and improve the quality of this section of the journal.

Until now: two reviews were accepted in April and are ready to be published with a short Corner commentary:

Azathioprine for multiple sclerosis (Ilaria Casetta, Gerardo Iuliano, and Graziella Filippini).

Immunosuppressant drugs for myasthenia gravis (Ian K Hart, Tarek Sharshar, and Sivakumar Sathasivam)

The second two reviews accepted in June are on the way:

Percutaneous transluminal angioplasty and stenting for carotid stenosis – A Cochrane review (Jörg Ederle, Roland L Featherstone, and Martin M Brown)

Antidepressants for neuropathic pain - a summary of Cochrane systematic review (Tiina Saarto and Phil J Wiffen)

In November 2007 a letter to support and promote the CNN Corner in the JNNP was sent to each Neurological Review Group, to involve them in identifying useful or helpful reviews produced by the groups, either from a clinical or a methodological point of view.

There was a prompt reply, published reviews have been identified by the Cochrane Neuromuscular Disease Group, the Dementia and Cognitive Improvement Group, further suggestions have come from the Movement disorder Group and Back Injury Group. These last two even before formal publication in the Cochrane Library.

We would like to kindly thank everyone for the warm participation and support. We actively seek the views of authors, readers, reviewers and editorial board members and hope the corner will represent a platform to further this exchange.

The identified reviews will be taken into account in the selection system in the autumn months.

THE BUSY CLINICIAN AND THE COMPLEXITY OF STATISTICS

NETWORK META-ANALYSIS: IT SOUNDS LIKE THE MERMAIDS' SINGING, BUT WE NEED TO BE SECURELY TIED TO THE MAST WHEN LISTENING!

We clinicians are frequently faced with a practical problem: should we give our patients the red or the green pill? Suppose that we know from literature that the red pill has been shown to be superior to the white one, and that in another study the green pill was almost as effective as the white one; unfortunately, there is no direct comparison between the red and the green! Were we attending arithmetic classes, we could then use the well known and simple "transitive" rule, and say that it is logical that the red one should be better than the green one. But we are in a very different situation, where biases are so frequent that we cannot simply rely on common sense. What source of evidence (if any) should we ask for? Network meta-analysis adds another statistical instrument to the clinician's luggage, combining multiple studies and making indirect statistical comparisons of treatments which were actually not directly compared in randomized trials.

However, along side some statistical problems, which are out of the scope of this brief note, network meta-analysis may actually combine evidence from trials which are substantially different, for quality, study population, etc, and therefore the validity of the results is to be taken with extreme caution; generally speaking, network meta-analysis tends only to be valid when including very similar studies, otherwise, results can be largely biased. Clinicians should be aware of the differences between "regular" meta-analysis (which adds the results of real studies) and network meta-analysis (which makes inferences on comparisons never tested in real studies); the latter is certainly useful to generate hypothesis, but should not be a substitute of the direct comparison of two or more treatments. We may well consider the "mermaid singing" of network meta-analysis, but being always secured to the mast of EBM while listening!

NEWS FROM COCHRANE REVIEW GROUPS

See recent reviews produced by these groups in the "Orange Pages" included with this newsletter.

DEMENTIA AND COGNITIVE IMPROVEMENT GROUP

Since the last publication of this newsletter, the Dementia and Cognitive Improvement Group (CDCIG) have published the following new reviews, new protocols and updated reviews in issues 2/2008 and 3/2008 of the Cochrane Library:

New reviews

- Physical activity and enhanced fitness to improve cognitive function in older people without known cognitive impairment
- Huperzine A for Alzheimer's disease
- Physical activity programs for persons with dementia

New protocols

- Naftidrofuryl for dementia
- Cannabinoids for the treatment of dementia
- Enteral feeding for older people with advanced dementia
- Carbohydrates for improving the cognitive performance of independent-living older adults with normal cognition or mild cognitive impairment

Updated reviews

- Acetyl-L-carnitine for dementia
- Nicotine for Alzheimer's disease
- Metrifonate for Alzheimer's disease
- Vitamin B6 for cognition
- Piracetam


- Propentofylline for dementia
- Trazodone for agitation in dementia
- Snoezelen for dementia
- Zhiling decoction for vascular dementia
- Respite care for people with dementia and their carers


At the time of writing we have 81 published reviews and 26 published protocols.

CDCIG are looking for review authors to develop the following systematic reviews:

- Active Abeta immunisation for the treatment of AD
- Acupuncture for MCI
- Aspirin and anti-inflammatory drugs for the prevention of dementia
- Creatine supplementation for cognition
- Cerebrolysin for VaD
- Hyperbaric oxygen therapy for vascular dementia
- L-Carnitine for cognitive function in healthy elderly
- Omega 3 for the treatment of dementia
- Phosphatidyl serine for cognitive enhancement
- Ritalin for cognitive enhancement in normals
- Tarenflurbil (Flurizan) for AD
- Vitamin B supplements for dementia



BACK GROUP


We published eight new and updated reviews and one new protocol in the first three issues in 2008 of *The Cochrane Library*. Five of them were selected for media coverage and/or podcasts (identified with ). Links can be found on the CBRG website (http://www.cochrane.iwh.on.ca/rev_comp.htm) or on *The Cochrane Library* website (<http://www.thecochranelibrary.com>). Rachel Couban, our Trials Search Co-ordinator, has also been working hard and has increased the number of RCTs and CCTs in our Trials Register from 2420 to 2663. Congratulations to all!

Engers A, Jellema P, Wensing M, van der Windt DA, Grol R, van Tulder MW. Individual patient education for low back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; 2008(1): CD004057. 

Graham N, Gross A, Goldsmith C, Klaber MJ. Mechanical traction for mechanical neck disorders. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; 2008(3):CD006408.


McCarthy C, Keating JL, Kent PM, Lall R, Lamb SE, Strimpakos N. Targeted manual therapy for non-specific low-back pain (Protocol). *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; 2008(2):CD007135.

Roelofs PD, Deyo RA, Koes BW, Scholten RJ, van Tulder MW. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs for low back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; 2008(1):CD000396. 
Staal JB, de Bie R, de Vet HCW, Hildebrandt J, Nelemans P. Injection therapy for subacute and chronic low-back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; 2008(3) 

Urquhart DM, Hoving JL, Assendelft WW, Roland M, van Tulder MW. Antidepressants for non-specific low back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; 2008(1):CD001703. 

Urrutia G, Burton AK, Morral A, Bonfill X, Zanolli G. Neuroreflexo-

therapy for non-specific low-back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2004;(2):CD003009.

van Duijvenbode ICD, Jellema P, Van Poppel MNM, van Tulder MW. Lumbar supports for prevention and treatment of low back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; 2008(2):CD00182. 

Yousefi-Nooraie R, Schonstein E, Heidari K, Rashidian A, Pennick V, Akbari-Kamrani M et al. Low level laser therapy for nonspecific low-back pain. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2008; (2):CD005107.

The Editorial Board released its *2008 Updated method guidelines for systematic reviews in the Cochrane Back Review Group* in March. This is the second update of our method guidelines and are intended to be a supplement to the *Cochrane Handbook of Systematic Reviews of Interventions* for reviews in the field of neck and back disorders. Please contact the editorial office if you would like to receive a copy.

The CBRG will be holding its Open Meeting at the Cochrane Colloquium in Freiburg, Germany on Saturday, October 4th, 2008 from 7:30-9:00 a.m. Everyone is welcome. Please plan to join us.

Staff at the editorial office have been busy converting all of our protocols and reviews to Review Manager 5. We're pleased to announce that we are now finished! A special thanks to Marie-Andrée Nowlan for her perseverance and attention to detail. Our next task is to help our authors, editors and peer-referees understand the new expectations. We have some materials developed and distributed to support them in this endeavour, but now need to refine them and finish the job.

EPILEPSY GROUP

So far in 2008 the Epilepsy Group has published four new reviews and four new protocols in *The Cochrane Library*. This brings the group's total to 47 published reviews and 18 published protocols. The group also has several review titles currently in various stages of the editorial process and plans to submit them in the next few months. The group is always looking for new review authors to join its team. If anyone is interested in undertaking a systematic review with the group, please contact the Review Group Co-ordinator (Rachael Kelly (r.jowett@liv.ac.uk)).

Titles available for review include: anticonvulsant therapy for epilepsy in people with hydrocephalus; cannibidol for epilepsy;

clonazepam monotherapy for epilepsy; diazepam add-on therapy for refractory epilepsy; diazepam monotherapy for epilepsy; felbamate add-on for refractory epilepsy; hormonal treatments for catamenial epilepsy; interventions to improve them memory for people with epilepsy; intravenous immunoglobulins for epilepsy; joint neurology obstetric clinics; oral vitamin K in late pregnancy for women with epilepsy; progabide add-on for refractory epilepsy; rufunimide add-on for refractory epilepsy; sulthiame monotherapy for epilepsy; treatments for the idiopathic occipital lobe epilepsy; vitamin K for pregnant women with epilepsy.

INJURIES GROUP

Emma Sydenham is the new Review Group Co-ordinator of the Cochrane Injuries Group Katharine Ker, the former co-ordinator is now the Group's research fellow.

New reviews of interest:

- *Locomotor training for walking after spinal cord njury* Mehrholz J, Kugler J, Pohl M

- *Fitness training for cardiorespiratory conditioning after traumatic brain injury* Hassett LM, Moseley AM, Tate R, Harmer AR

Check out the NEW "GREEN PAGES"

OF NEUROLOGICAL PROTOCOLS from The Cochrane Library (CL) - [Issues 1-2, 2008](#)

If you know of any useful trials for these new protocols *let us know*.
We can help build the best evidence possible!

CONTACT DETAILS FOR COCHRANE REVIEW GROUPS

Back Group

Victoria Pennick, CANADA
Tel: +416 927 2027 ext: 2158
Fax: +416 927 4167
vpennick@iwh.on.ca
www.cochrane.iwh.on.ca

Epilepsy Group

Rachael Kelly (formerly Jowett), UK
Tel: +44 151 5295462
Fax: +44 151 5295465
r.jowett@liv.ac.uk
<http://www.epilepsy.cochrane.org/>

Injuries Group

Emma Sydenham, UK
Tel: +44 020 7958 8132
Fax: +44 020 7958 8111
Cochrane_Injuries@Lshmt.ac.uk
<http://injuries.cochrane.org>

Movement Disorders Group

Ema Roque & Joaquim Ferreira, PORTUGAL Tel:
+35121 797 34 53
Fax: +35121 781 96 88
movementdisord@mail.telepac.pt

MS Group

Liliana Coco, ITALY
Tel: +39 022394201
Fax: +39 0270638217
neuroepidemiologia@istituto-besta.it

Pain Group

Jessica Thomas, UK
Tel: +44 1865 225762
Fax: +44 1865 225400
jessica.thomas@pru.ox.ac.uk
www.jr2.ox.ac.uk/Cochrane

Neuro-Oncology

Gail Quinn, UK
(Orphan of Gynaecological Cancer Group)
Tel: +44 1225 826349
Fax: not available
gail.quinn@ruh-bath.swest.nhs.uk

Drugs & Alcohol Group

Laura Amato, ITALY
Tel: +39 06 83060479
Fax: +39 06 83060463
amato@aspazio.it

Neuromuscular Group

Janice Fernandes, UK
Tel: +44 020 7848 6124
Fax: +44 020 7848 6123
cochranemnd@kcl.ac.uk
www.kcl.ac.uk/cochranemnd

Incontinence Group

June Cody, UK
Tel: +44 1224 559244
Fax: +44 1224 554580
j.cody@abdn.ac.uk

Stroke Group

Hazel Fraser, UK
Tel: +44 131 537 2273
Fax: 44 131 332 5150
csrg@skull.dcn.ed.ac.uk
www.dcn.ed.ac.uk/csrg

Dementia and Cognitive

Improvement Group
Helen Collins, UK
Tel: +44 1865 234307
Fax: +44 1865 221354
helen.collins@ndm.ox.ac.uk



AUS
Agenzia Umbria Sanità

PLEASE SEND ANY QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS TO:

Cochrane Neurological Network

Osservatorio Epidemiologico - Direzione Regionale Sanità e Servizi Sociali - Regione Umbria

Contact: **Kathy Mahan - Agenzia Umbria Sanità**

Via M. Angeloni, 61 - 06124 Perugia -ITALY

Tel: +39 075 5026147 or +39 075 5056987 Fax: +39 0755058796

E-mail: cochrane.neuronet@ausumbria.it Website: www.cochraneneuronet.org