



THE SOUTH ASIAN COCHRANE NETWORK

August 24

2006

Prof. BV Moses Centre for Clinical Trials & Evidence Based Medicine;
Christian Medical College, Vellore, Tamil Nadu, India

Minutes of
the annual
Steering
Group
meeting

**THE SOUTH ASIAN COCHRANE NETWORK
STEERING GROUP MEETING
24 AUGUST, 2005**

PARTICIPANT LIST

Steering group members

Chrishantha Abeysena, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama, *Sri Lanka*

Joseph Mathew, (representing Meenu Singh), Department of Paediatric Pulmonology, Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh, *India*

Kazi Md. Abdul Kalam Azad, (in lieu of Omar Rahman), Centre for Health, Population & Development, Independent University, Dhaka, *Bangladesh*

Omar Rahman, Centre for Health, Population & Development, Independent University, Dhaka, *Bangladesh* (on Skype)

Prabash Kumar, (in lieu of Purvish Parikh), representing the Cochrane Cancer Network, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, *India*

Prathap Tharyan, Christian Medical College, Vellore, *India* (Coordinator, SACN), Editor, Cochrane Schizophrenia Group

Rakesh Aggarwal (in lieu of Kameshwar Prasad), All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, *India*,

Sreekumaran Nair, Manipal Academy of Health Sciences, Kasthurba Medical College, Manipal, *India*, Statistical Editor, Cochrane Acute Respiratory Infections Group

Sridharan Ramarathnam, The Nerve Centre, Chennai, *India*, Editor, Cochrane Epilepsy Group

Zenobia Kanagaraj, Administrator, SACN coordinating site, Prof BV Moses Centre for Clinical Trials and EBM, CMC Vellore (invitee)

Apologies from:

Anita Zaidi, Department of Pediatrics, Aga Khan University, Karachi, *Pakistan*

Batool Rehan, (in lieu of Dr. Anita Zaidi) Department of Pediatrics, Aga Khan University, Karachi, *Pakistan*

Jayaprakash Muliylil, Dean, Christian Medial College, Vellore, India, Advisory Board SACN (invitee)

Kameshwar Prasad, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, *India*, Editor, Cochrane Stroke Group

Meenu Singh, Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh, *India*, Editor, Cochrane Acute Respiratory Infections Group

Saeed Farooq, Postgraduate Medical Institute Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, *Pakistan*

Shailesh Lele, (Editor, SACN news letter), BVDU Dental College & Hospital, Pune, *India*

AGENDA

1. Introductions and welcome to invitees
2. Minutes of the steering group meeting held at the Acres Club, Mumbai, 14 September 2005
3. Report of the Network sites
 - India:*
 - a. CMC Vellore: coordinating site
 - b. All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi
 - c. BVDU Dental College and Hospital, Pune
 - d. Manipal Institute of health Sciences, Manipal
 - e. Nerve Centre, Chennai
 - f. Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh
 - g. Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai
 - h. Jawaharlal Nehru Cancer Institute/Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre, Bhopal
 - Pakistan:*
 - i. Aga Khan University, Karachi
 - j. Post Graduate Institute, Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar
 - Sri Lanka*
 - k. University of Kelaniya, Ragama
 - Bangladesh*
 - l. Independent University, Dhaka
4. Review of the Strategic Plan for the SACN drafted at Goa and activities undertaken by each potential network site in fulfilling the roles to qualify as a Network site
5. Update on the Memorandum of Understanding between Network Sites and the SACN
6. The Developing Countries Initiative
7. The WHO International Controlled Trials Registry Platform and the Indian Clinical Trials Register
8. Influencing health policy
9. The Dublin Colloquium
10. Cochrane Steering Group and Centre Director's meeting in 2008
11. Funding issues
12. Publishing issues
13. South Asian Cochrane Centre and Network by 2008
14. Any other matters

Summary of action points and resolutions

List of review titles registered by SACN members (first authors only)

1. Welcome and introductions

The meeting commenced at 10.15 a.m. Dr. Prathap Tharyan, Coordinator, SACN, welcomed the members of the steering group and specially welcomed Dr. Prabhaskar Kumar, representing the Mumbai site on behalf of Dr. Purvish Parikh, Dr. Joseph Mathew, representing the Chandigarh site on behalf of Dr. Meenu Singh and Dr. Rakesh Aggarwal, representing the Delhi site on behalf of Dr. Kameshwar Prasad, who had to cancel his trip at the last minute due to personal problems. Dr. Prathap conveyed the regards and apologies of our special invitee, Dr. Jayaprakash Muliyl, Dean, Christian Medical College, Vellore, India, and member - Advisory Board, SACN, who was unable to attend the meeting due to a workshop he was involved in concurrently. Ms. Zenobia Kanagaraj, administrator SACN, kept the minutes for the meeting.

Dr. Prathap presented a brief report of the previous meeting held at the ACERS Club, Mumbai on 14th September, 2005. The minutes of the previous meeting were also briefly discussed. The minutes of the September, 2005 steering group meeting are presented in **Appendix I**.

Matters arising from the minutes:

a. Purchase of a national subscription to the Cochrane Library:

After the steering committee meeting at Mumbai, the steering group had hosted a dinner for representatives of the ICMR and Indian representatives of John Wiley & Sons during which a proposal prepared by John Wiley to the Indian Council of Medical Research and the Department of Biotechnology to jointly purchase a national subscription to the Cochrane Library was reviewed. This proposal was forwarded by Dr. Prathap to the ICMR and the DBT and Dr. Prathap had subsequently met with Dr. Nirmal Ganguli, Dr. Vasantha Muthuswamy and other senior officials of the ICMR in February, 2006 to discuss this proposal. The proposal was rejected as being too expensive and unrealistic. It assumed that 5% of the urban population of India would use the Cochrane Library and had charged for access for this number. This estimated number of users was thought to be extremely unrealistic at this stage as usage statistics from John Wiley for the online version of the Cochrane Library in August 2005 was only 851 hits from India. Since then, Rajesh Pandit, the Wiley representative had left the organisation and his successor will be contacted to renegotiate the proposal and present a more realistic proposal.

Dr. Joseph Mathew subsequently made further suggestions regarding increasing access to the Cochrane Library more widely available. These include:

1. A flexible pricing structure that Wiley could permit based on usage for individuals and organizations.
2. Use alternate vendors
3. Change publisher and reduce costs considerably in keeping with the goals of the Collaboration.

While the first option could be pursued with the publishers, the latter two are matters for the Collaboration's administration to decide.

It was decided to bring up the issue of increased access to the Cochrane Library in countries like India, that do not qualify for free access to the Cochrane Library under existing schemes for developing countries like PERI, HINARI, BIREME etc., at the Developing Countries Initiative meeting at the Dublin colloquium in October this year.

Dr. Chrisantha mentioned that the Cochrane Library was available in Sri Lanka under the PERI Initiative and Mr. Nick Royle, CEO of the Cochrane Collaboration had informed Dr. Prathap earlier that the Cochrane Library was freely available to people in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan as well.

b. SACN website:

The SACN website was designed by Mr. Venkatesh, a programmer with the Prof BV Moses centre at Vellore and has been available at www.cochrane-sacn.org for the past year. Details of training workshops are available from this site. Comments for improvements as well as items pertaining to activities and plans for the member sites are solicited.

c. Visit by Sir Iain Chalmers to Vellore, November 2006

Dr. Prathap outlined the key events in the visit by Sir Iain and Lady Jan Chalmers to Vellore in November 2006. CMC Vellore had hosted them during their stay on 4th and 5th November. Sir Iain had visited the Prof BV Moses centre and had been appreciative and supportive of the activities of the SACN. Sir Iain graciously consented to deliver a well received lecture that chronicled the challenges involved in the formation of the Cochrane Collaboration and detailed his current work with the James Lind Alliance, and DUETS; all pioneering initiatives in health-care. A national seminar had been envisaged to coincide with his visit but had to be called off as Sir Iain was visiting us while on holiday and Lady Jan did not wish him to be caught up in strenuous academic activities. Sir Iain and Lady Jan were conferred certificates of gratitude from the SACN; Sir Iain, "In recognition of a lifetime of immensely valuable contributions to evaluating the effects of interventions in health care and, in the process, saving numerous lives, promoting global collaboration, and inspiring future generations of health care professionals" and Lady Jan for supporting Sir Iain in his endeavors. Sir Iain had given a press conference and his remarks were carried in the local and national press.

The minutes of the steering group meeting 2005 were passed unanimously.

2. Report of the Network sites

India:

a. CMC Vellore: coordinating site

Dr. Prathap the coordinator of the South Asian Cochrane Network presented the activities of the coordinating site at the Prof BV Moses Centre for Clinical Trials and Evidence Based Medicine at the Christian Medical College, Vellore for the period September 2005 to August 2006 to the group.

Dr. Prathap mentioned the various projects handled by the coordinating site. These include the *Effective Health Care Alliance Programme (EHCAP)*: (<http://www.liv.ac.uk/lstm/ehcap/introduction.htm>) for which he is a Project alliance partner and the in-country representative for India. This is an international research

network commissioned by the Department for International Development UK, (DFID) with a grant to Professor Paul Garner, Head of the International Health Research Group at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. Through this program the coordinating site had mentored review authors involved in infectious diseases reviews. It had also introduced 'Evidence Updates', one page summaries of Cochrane reviews produced by the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, in the institution's CME journals to introduce 300 practising clinicians across the country to systematic reviews and the various reviews summarised as updates. The coordinating site was also involved in a community initiative along with the institution's Community Health Department in introducing systematic reviews through the North Arcot District Health Information Network (NADHI), through which a monthly news bulletin will be used to disseminate Evidence Updates to around 400 general practitioners in the district.

The second funded project is a subcontract from the University of Leeds to code clinical trials from middle and low income countries as part of an European Union-funded initiative, Pragmatic Randomized Controlled Trials in HealthCare (Practihc) (<http://www.practihc.org/>), which provides open-access tools, training and mentoring to researchers in developing countries who are interested in designing and conducting pragmatic randomized controlled trials of healthcare interventions. As part of this project, two trained staff members, Ms. Sangeetha Palani and Mr. Jabez Paul Barnabas along with Mr. Venkatesh, had coded RCTs from middle and low income countries published in 1991, 1995 and 2001 on various parameters that addressed study quality and reporting. Mr. Dharmendhiran had completed data entry for more than 6000 identified trials. As an offshoot of this project, trials involving Mental Health were also being separately analyzed for trends in reporting. This project will be completed by November 2006 but the centre hoped to retain the services of these trained staff and utilize them in hand-searching activities and maintaining a register of trials done in the South Asian region.

The third project was with the editorial base of the Cochrane Schizophrenia Group (CSG) in Leeds. Since earlier this year, the Prof BV Moses centre had been named the CSG satellite to help retrieve and code trial reports in schizophrenia and maintain the Schizophrenia Group's central trials register. Ms. Julie Monalisa had been trained for this and now functions as an Assistant Trial Search Coordinator and was involved in coding trials and maintaining the CSG trials register. As part of this activity, Ms. Zenobia Kangaraj, the administrator for the SACN and Ms Sangeetha had visited Leeds in February 2005 and had also visited the UK Cochrane Centre.

A fourth activity initiated and funded by the coordinating site that was nearing completion involved evaluating the role of editorial policy via instructions to authors for the various Indian Journals in improving the quality of reporting of RCTs; in particular, their endorsement of the CONSORT guidelines as a pre-requisite to publication. All trials published in 2004 and 2005 in all indexed and selected non-indexed Indian medical journals were being assessed and the analyzed results would be sent for publication to a leading Indian Journal soon in an effort to improve the quality of reporting in Indian journals.

Dr. Prathap also presented details of the various presentations and workshops that were conducted highlighting the work of SACN. Dr. Prathap had presented papers highlighting the role of reliable evidence in Mental Health at conferences in Breklum, Germany in October 2005 and at the World Council of Churches General Assembly in Porto Allegre, Brazil in February 2006. A plenary presentation addressing the relevance of Cochrane

systematic reviews to the developing world, a free paper highlighting the formation and progress of the SACN, a report at the annual general body meeting detailing the Cochrane Collaboration's response to the tsunami, and a workshop on training the trainers were contributions of the coordinating site at the Melbourne Cochrane Colloquium.

A Cochrane Review Completion workshop was held in November 2005 with 13 participants receiving hands on training to complete their reviews; Dr. Lelia Duley, an editor for the Pregnancy and Childbirth review group and Dr. Prathap were the resource persons. The annual protocol development workshop was held in July 2006 for 25 participants from across the country. Dr. Clive Adams, coordinating editor for the schizophrenia group and Ms. Judy Wright, trials search coordinator, assisted Dr Prathap as resource persons.

A workshop on Standard and Advanced Statistics for Meta-analysis was held in August with 25 participants attending to improve their skills in statistics. Dr. Georgia Salanti, member of the Cochrane Statistical Methods group and the Statistical Editor of the Cochrane Developmental, Psychological And Learning Problems Group, had been sponsored by the Statistical Methods group to visit Vellore and was an excellent resource person. The coordinating centre now follows a systematic pattern of conducting workshops with two workshops held every year; a Cochrane Protocol Development Workshop in July and a Cochrane Review Completion Workshop in November.

During Dr. Georgia's stay of a month in Vellore, she had initiated several projects on the methodological aspects of Cochrane reviews and meta-analysis and had identified members from the biostatistics department and the coordinating site at CMC to work on these projects.

There has been considerable interest in undertaking systematic reviews within CMC and there are currently 25 members of the faculty serving as authors or co-authors of Cochrane reviews and four completed reviews (one of which has been updated twice) and 15 protocols or titles involving members of the institution. Modules on systematic reviews, meta-analysis and the Cochrane Collaboration are regular features in three research methodology courses conducted for postgraduate students and for extra-mural personal. The Cochrane Library is available online via the Dodd memorial library website on the institution's intranet and is regularly used by staff and students at CMC.

The future plans for the coordinating centre were outlined by Dr. Prathap: CMC Vellore is planning to construct a purpose-built centralized research facility with administrative support in grant writing, grants administration and training support in conducting trials. Dr. Prathap in his recently appointed role as Vice-Principal in charge of Research for the institution will coordinate this and will incorporate the Prof BV Moses centre into this initiative. Additional staff will be hired to help with various activities; these include developing a clinical trials register for the institution to prospectively register clinical trials after ethics committee approval; liaising with the Indian Council of Medical Research in setting up an Indian Clinical Trials Register; developing a database of clinical trials done in the South Asian Region; creating a priority list of interventions relevant to the region that need up-to-date evidence; attempts to improve the quality of reporting of clinical trials in the region; training and mentoring people to undertake systematic reviews; and training people to undertake pragmatic RCTs; training hand-searchers from the various

network sites to identify trials published in journals that are not indexed and from grey literature. Funding for this will come from various sources.

The Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) had approached Dr. Prathap to apply for funding of the Prof BV Moses centre for clinical trials and evidence based medicine for the next five years. The centre will function as an ICMR Advanced Centre for Evidence Based Medicine. The Department of Biotechnology (DBT) had approached Dr. Prathap to submit a proposal to develop training courses in RCT methods. A certificate course is being envisaged and a distance education module will be developed. A proposal is being submitted for funding under the UK India Educational Research Initiative (UKIERI) for collaborative funding for the South Asian Cochrane Network and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) and the UK Cochrane Centre. If the last proposal is funded, this will help fund some of the activities of the Network sites in India and coordinated activities across sites to evaluate and change clinical practice based on best evidence as is being done in the Sea-Orchid project in SE Asia with the help of the Australasian Cochrane Centre.

The coordinating site also plans to have regular meetings on a monthly basis for contributors to the Cochrane Collaboration within the institution.

b. All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

Dr. Rakesh Aggarwal represented the AIIMS site on behalf of Professor Kameshwar Prasad and has a protocol registered. In November 2005 the AIIMS site conducted an Evidence Based Neurosciences Workshop but it was unclear whether there were any workshops conducted in 2006 as mentioned in the 2006 training calendar sent by Dr. Kameshwar Prasad. Professor Prasad had also published a book on Evidence Based Medicine that had received favourable reviews.

Dr. Rakesh said that the Cochrane Library was not available online at AIIMS for general use as yet, and only Prof Prasad's personal copies were available. It was suggested that the AIIMS site should try to secure a subscription for the Cochrane Library to make it available to everyone at AIIMS. Other suggestions given for the development of the site was to conduct sensitization talks, hold protocol workshops to get more people involved in the activities of the Collaboration and to encourage junior faculty to undertake systematic reviews.

c. Bharathi Vidyapeet Dental University, Pune

Dr Shailesh Lele, the site representative has had limited success with propagating the activities of the SACN and so has conveyed his interest to de-link himself from the activities of the network. Dr. Lele is now the academic Dean of this college and has little time to devote to the activities of the SACN. He is willing to extend his support if we are able to find someone from the same region with the necessary resources. He had been hopeful of publishing a newsletter in conjunction with the coordinating site but was unable to do so thus far and so has handed over the responsibility to the coordinating centre.

It was resolved to take away SACN site status from this institution and thank Dr. Lele for his support to the SACN and the steering group thus far.

It was resolved that the coordinating centre would take on this role and produce two news-letters a year: one after the annual Colloquium and the other mid-year. The material that would be included in the newsletter would be abstracts of new reviews, abstract of important reviews, reports, list of protocols published by different sites, Cochrane related activities, list of completed reviews, interviews with individuals and any write ups that would be relevant and helpful to the improvement of healthcare in the region. Contributions would be solicited.

d. Manipal Academy of Health (MAHE), Manipal

Dr.Sreekumaran Nair, the site representative, presented the report of the activities they have been involved in the year 2005-2006. They have eight protocols published and one student completed a project using Cochrane Methodology. Faculty from their site had been sent to the coordinating site at Vellore to attend workshops on Protocol Development, Review Completion and Statistics for meta-analysis. They had also organized sensitization workshops in their site to introduce people to the Collaboration.

To support the activities of the site they have devised a system to raise funds by voluntary contributions with matching grants from their University. They are also looking forward to funding for one of their reviews from the University of Alabama.

They are currently working on a project 'To assess the awareness and attitude towards Cochrane activities among health care professionals / administrators and policy makers in South Asia'. Some of the undergraduate and postgraduate students are involved in this initiative. They have designed a newsletter for their site and have also included systematic reviews in the curriculum. The faculty members are to attend regular training sessions.

This site has centralised online access to the Cochrane Library for users within the institution. There are no paid staff members at present exclusively for SACN activities.

Dr. Sreekumaran Nair had represented Dr. Prathap, who had been invited to attend the Developing Country Initiative meeting held at Barcelona earlier this year, as Dr. Prathap was unable to attend due to prior commitments. Dr. Nair presented his report later during the steering group meeting.

Dr. Nair and Dr. Prathap explained to the group that Dr. Nair had been invited to attend a month long workshop in South Africa under the Reviews for Africa (RAP) Programme and Dr. Prathap had secured funding for his visit and stay from EHCAP funds with the permission of Dr. Paul Garner. However, Dr. Nair was unable to attend due to the month long duration of this workshop. We had thought that Dr. Nair's attendance could help setting up of a similar month-long protocol development workshop in India as well but now feel this would be poorly attended for the same reasons that Dr. Nair had in leaving work and family to attend the RAP workshop. The group concurred that a month- long workshop would find few takers in India.

e. Nerve Centre, Chennai

Dr. Sridharan Ramaratnam presented the activities of this site as site representative. The site has dedicated space with computer facilities and a copy of the Cochrane Library. Dr. Sridharan along with Dr. Lakshmi Narasimhan conducted a Cochrane Protocol Development and Review Completion Workshop at Chennai from the 4th -5th March 2006, with some funding support from the coordinating site. Dr. Nair had attended and assisted Dr. Ramaratnam and Dr. Lakshmi Narasimhan as a resource person. The Chennai site has to its credit five reviews and three registered titles. From 2007, a protocol and review completion workshop will be held annually in January.

f. Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh

Dr Joseph Matthew attended the Steering Committee on behalf of Dr. Meenu Singh, the site representative. Dr. Matthew presented a report of the activities handled by the site during the year 2005-2006. In his presentation, he mentioned that they conducted sensitization workshops over half day in June and September for the faculty members of the PGIMER. Evidence Based Medicine workshops were conducted in collaboration with Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP) and Royal College of Pediatrics & Child Health from Jan 31-Feb 2, 2006, at Chandigarh and from July 14-16, 2006, at London. They had six faculty members (three each from UK & India) and 35 participants.

The activities conducted during conferences were a debate on Evidence Based Medicine Practice at PEDICON 2006 (Jan 7, 2006), Delhi, a presentation at the Melbourne Colloquium, October 24, 2006 by Dr. Mathew and a presentation at the Health Technology Assessment International meeting, July 5 2006, at Adelaide. The teaching activities included an Asthma Training Module and publication of management guidelines based on evidence from Cochrane reviews.

In his presentation, he mentioned the activities they have planned for the future and they are:

- IAP-RCPCH-SACN EBM workshop at PEDICON 2007, at Mumbai, Jan 2007.
- Two sensitization workshops.
- A Protocol development workshop.
- Dublin Colloquium:
 - Presentation of data on applicability of reviews in developing countries.
 - Conduct of workshop (Developing country issues). Dr. Nair was scheduled to help with this but since he will not be attending the Colloquium, Dr. Prathap will help Dr. Mathew with this.
 - Contribution to workshop (train the trainer).

g. Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai

Dr. Prabhash Kumar represented this site on behalf of Dr. Purvish Parikh, the site representative. They have one title and one protocol to their credit. Dr. Prathap had help resolve a conflict between review groups regarding registration that had delayed their work. The site held a workshop on EBM with Dr. Prathap as a resource person and publishes an EBM booklet every year for the last 5 years; every Thursday they discuss landmark articles. The Cochrane Library is available for users online. Dr Prathap and Dr. Ramaratnam mentioned that Dr. Purvish had offered to host the coordinating site of the

Cochrane Cancer Network at the Tata Memorial Hospital and this was well received; further developments are awaited from Dr. Parikh.

h. Jawaharlal Nehru Cancer Institute/Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre, Bhopal

This site has been dormant as Dr. Gopesh Modi had not been successful with initiating activities and Dr. Manoj Pandey who had joined this site and who was suppose to help in making some progress has left for the Varanasi Hindu University. It was therefore resolved to formally remove this institution from the list of SACN sites.

Pakistan:

a. Aga Khan University, Karachi

Anita Zaidi, SACN AKU Site Coordinator was unable to attend the meeting due to her prior commitments and had asked Ms. Batool Rehan to attend it on her behalf. Due to the delay in getting a visa Ms. Batool Rehan could not make it to the meeting or to the statistics workshops with which the steering group meeting had been clubbed. The Pakistan site had conducted a Protocol Development Workshop at the Aga Khan University at Karachi in April 2006. Dr. Prathap Tharyan was the resource person who helped the team in conducting the workshop. Around 25 people attended this workshop from the AKU and other institutions in and outside Karachi. He reported that the AKU has excellent facilities, a dedicated and experienced support staff ad a great faculty with a good research climate. Dr. Zulfikar Bhutta, who is well known internationally for his work and publications, and Dr. Prathap addressed the faculty of AKU at the culmination of the workshop regarding the challenges to evidence-based practice. This workshop was well received and was reported in the national press. AKU has online access to the Cochrane Library.

b. Post Graduate Institute, Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar

Dr.Saeed Farooq was not able to make it to the meeting and therefore had sent the following report detailing the activities carried out by the site in the year under purview:

Two members from the site participated in the Protocol Development workshop held at the Aga Khan University, Karachi in April 2006. Dr. Prathap Tharyan was scheduled to conduct an introductory workshop in Peshawar after the workshop in Karachi. This however was not possible due to the visa restrictions that prevented him from travelling to Peshawar. In his absence, Dr. Saeed Farooq conducted the workshop. It was a very successful event attended by 73 faculty members along with the Dean of PGMI. Fifteen faculty members expressed their interest to start the Cochrane Systematic reviews.

Dr. Saeed Farooq delivered a lecture to the Eye Society NWFP (North West Frontier Province) which was attended by fifty ophthalmologists from all over the province. As a result of these activities there has been a tremendous increase in the interest in the Cochrane Collaboration and systematic reviews.

Four faculty members from the site have registered the interest with their respective groups for registering the topics and many other are in the process of initiating reviews.

Upon the request of the participants of these workshops the Dean PGMI has agreed to subscribe to the Cochrane Library. An order for the subscription of the Library has been placed with the agent of Wiley Publishers in Pakistan.

Cochrane Corner is an initiative regularly published in the Journal of Pakistan Psychiatric Society (www.jppts.com.pk), a journal edited by Dr. Saeed. The latest issue of the journal highlights this regular feature prominently and has included three abstracts. Professor Prathap Tharyan's guest editorial in the same issue, which highlighted the need for contextualising evidence was well received and has served to highlight the need for obtaining locally relevant evidence to put into practice.

Sri Lanka

a. University of Kelaniya, Ragama

This site has been very active this year with the support of their representative Dr. Chrishantha Abeyseena. The site has the required space and computers along with photocopying and printing facilities. Dr. Chrishantha also mentioned that they have got free subscription for the Cochrane Library through the PERI initiative.

Dr. Chrishantha in his report said that they have conducted two Protocol Development workshops with a participation of 16 members at Faculty of Medicine, University of Peradeniya and 12 members at Faculty of Medicine, University of Ruhuna, and Galle. Both these workshops were held in December 2005 with Dr. Prathap Tharyan as the resource faculty. A program on Evidence Based Medicine was conducted at the Post Graduate Institute of Medicine, Colombo on the 2nd of December'05 with Dr. Prathap Tharyan as the resource person, which was attended by 29 members.

Sessions on Critical Appraisal Skills were conducted at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama with a participation of 23 members on 21 February 2006 and Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura with the participation of 18 members on 19 May, 2006. Dr. Chrishantha undertook these workshops. A session on Cochrane Systematic Reviews was conducted at the Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of Sri Jayewardenepura with Dr. Prathap Tharyan as the resource person on 23 June, 2006. A session on Critical Appraisal of a Systematic Review was conducted at the Family Health Bureau Auditorium, Colombo on 8 February 2006 by Dr. Chrishantha.

The funding for the site in 2005 came from WHO which has left them with a balance of SLR 8000.00. They have not applied for any funding in 2006 as they still have some amount of funds given by the WHO.

The site has developed links with the Sri Lanka Medical Association, College of Community Physicians, Kandy Society of Medicine and Galle Medical Association which would be helpful in the activities of the site.

The future activities planned as mentioned by Dr. Chrishantha are to conduct workshops on Cochrane Protocol Development and Cochrane Review Completion. He also intends to have regular sessions on Introduction to systematic reviews, EBM, RCTs and on Statistics. There is a plan to integrate EBM in the undergraduate curriculum.

Dr. Chrishantha is working on a protocol with Dr. Prathap and Dr. Thambu David from CMC, which he hopes to submit later this month; Dr. Gawrie Hapgulle has just completed a review along with Dr. Prathap and Dr. Aika Omari (from the UK) which is due to be published in issue 1 2006 of the Library and Dr. Janaki Vidnapitharan has a published review and a protocol.

A suggestion was made that more people be inducted into the pool of resource people in Sri Lanka to help Dr. Chrishantha conduct training activities. Dr. Gawrie and Dr. Janaki could be encouraged to take more active participation in these workshops.

Bangladesh

a. Independent University, Dhaka

Dr. Omar Rahman is the site representative and was unable to attend the meeting but spoke to us via SKYPE. Dr. Omar reported that so far they had not played an active role but as a start they had sent Kazi Md. Abul Kalam Azad for the workshop on Standard and Advanced statistics for Meta-analysis held at the coordinating centre in Christian Medical College, Vellore, India. Dr. Omar was keen to continue efforts to develop his site. He responded affirmatively to suggestions made by the group that their site would conduct a workshop in March 2007. Another suggestion from members was that some of them could go to Bangladesh in December 2006 to hold sensitization workshops and later, after identifying people who had registered titles, members could help Dr. Omar with the protocol workshop in March 2007.

It was resolved to retain the Independent University as an SACN site for another year and help them develop their activities during the year with active participation from the SACN sites elsewhere. It was also proposed to consider involving the International Diarrhoeal Diseases Research Centre at Dhaka in SACN activities.

4. Review of the Strategic Plan for the SACN drafted at Goa and activities undertaken by each potential network site in fulfilling the roles to qualify as a Network site:

The strategic plan was not reviewed and discussed in detail but it was resolved that a tabulated sheet would be prepared and mailed across to all the site representatives who would list the activities for the year. There would be an additional form for reporting the progress of the sites which would be sent at the sites end of every three months. This would enable better collection of information required for reporting to the Australasian Cochrane Centre and would also inform each site of whether it is indeed fulfilling the stipulated roles for being an SACN site.

A Training Calendar would be circulated before November and training events for 2007 are now solicited.

It was proposed that an annual essay competition could be arranged at the national level to encourage awareness of EBM.

5. Update on the Memorandum of Understanding between Network Sites and the SACN

All sites apart from AIIMS, New Delhi and the Independent University, Bangladesh had signed an MOU with the SACN. These memoranda are considered important as it demonstrates the commitment of the respective institutions to provide support for SACN activities. The AIIMS and the IU are encouraged to submit signed memoranda at the earliest.

6. The Developing Countries Initiative

Dr. Sreekumaran Nair presented a brief report of the DCI meeting held at Barcelona. It is proposed to set up a DC Network as an official entity within the Cochrane Collaboration and this proposal would be presented to the Collaboration at the Dublin Colloquium. Dr. Prathap had endorsed this initiative on behalf of the SACN and had sent a letter of support. The DCI proposal would be circulated to all steering committee members. It was felt that the SACN's strategic plan incorporated most of the actions envisaged by the DCI. Dr. Nair would represent the SACN on this initiative and Dr. Prathap would represent the SACN at Dublin, since Dr. Nair would not be attending.

7. The WHO International Controlled Trials Registry Platform (WHO ICTRP) and the Indian Clinical Trials Register

Dr. Prathap highlighted the work of the WHO ICTRP; he is a member of the WHO ICTRP Scientific Advisory Group and had attended the SAG meeting in Geneva in April 2006. The Cochrane Collaboration has officially endorsed the idea of prospective registration of clinical trials at inception and SACN also concurs with this as well as the disclosure of the 20-item data-set advised by the WHO ICTRP. Dr. Prathap is also a member of the steering group of the ICMR-sponsored Indian Clinical Trials register that is in the process of registering trials from India; initially all ICMR sponsored trials and later all trials. The article on this initiative that Dr. Prathap had written for the National Medical Journal of India was also circulated to all members. The next meeting of the ICTRP would held in November 2006 at Kobe in Japan. Dr. Prathap suggested that member sites should advertise this initiative and encourage compliance with this.

8. Influencing health policy

As part of the SACN's efforts to influence health policy in India, Dr. Prathap had requested Dr. Lalit Kant at the ICMR to hold a workshop inviting ICMR members across the country and other policy makers to attend, Dr Prathap and Dr. Paul Garner would be resource persons and would highlight the strategic plans of the SACN; elaborate on steps involved in the production of Cochrane systematic reviews and highlight reviews of relevance to the Indian sub-continent that could influence policy. Dr. Lalit Kant of the ICMR had been encouraging and a date is being sought for early October for this workshop when Dr. Paul Garner will be visiting CMC, Vellore.

Another initiative that is being planned is the publication of a commentary in the National Medical Journal of India on the recently updated systematic review on Directly Observed Treatment for TB in the National Medical Journal of India. This update had reported that DOT had no influence on either a positive outcome or in better adherence to treatment.

Dr. Piyush Sahni, the editor of the NMJI, had welcomed the idea and Dr. Prathap and colleagues from the department of community health at CMC (Dr. Vinohar Balraj and Dr. Jayaprakash Muliyl) were in the process of writing up this commentary. Dr. Paul Garner and Dr. Jimmy Volmik, the authors of this review, had agreed to also write a response to this commentary for the journal. The results of the proposed review and commentary are likely to be controversial in India, as the health policy had wholly supported this programme, but through a balanced critique of the review and the DOTS programme, we hope to draw attention to lacunae in the evidence and suggest strategies for better reporting of outcomes and alternative strategies to improve adherence.

The editor of the National Medical Journal had also welcomed a request from Dr. Prathap for publication of systematic reviews relevant to health care in India after publication in the Cochrane Library. Dr. Prathap hopes to submit a recently completed review (with Gawrie and Aika) on Primaquine for prevention for relapses in *Plasmodium Vivax* malaria; this review had shown conclusively that the WHO recommended regimen of 14 days of primaquine following an initial dose of chloroquine was superior to the 5-day course recommended by health authorities in India, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. The review, based largely on trials conducted in India, Pakistan and Afghanistan, is likely to impact health policy and it is hoped to submit this for print publication once the Cochrane review is published in early January.

9. The Dublin Colloquium

Dr. Joseph Mathew and Dr. Joseph Philip Raj had secured developing country stipends to attend this year's colloquium at Dublin. Drs. Sreekumaran Nair and Prathap Tharyan had served on the stipend committee. Dr. Mathew would be presenting a paper and helping with workshops. Dr. Prathap would present the Ken Warren prize recipient for the year, as the outgoing chair of the Ken Warren prize selection committee. He would also participate in the welcoming newcomers to the collaboration section and in meetings of the Quality Assurance Group and the EHCAP group. He would attend the editorial meeting of the schizophrenia group in Leeds, UK before going to Dublin. Dr. Sridharan Ramaratnam would attend the colloquium and meetings of the epilepsy group. Zenobia Kanagaraj, the administrator of the SACN would also attend as a sponsored entity, thanks to the Australasian Cochrane Centre.

Dr. Janaki from Sri Lanka would also attend the Colloquium. It is unclear whether any member of the SACN from Pakistan would attend. It is hoped the five SACN members, and any others from the region who would be at Dublin would get together.

10. Cochrane Steering Group and Centre Director's meeting in 2008

At the 2006 steering group meeting, Dr. Prathap had secured approval from the members to submit a bid to host the mid-year meeting of the Cochrane Collaboration Steering group and Centre Directors for 2008 April. Sally Green had rejected suggestions made by Dr. Prathap to host the meeting in established conference venues such as Delhi, Mumbai or Goa and had requested that the venue be the coordinating site at CMC Vellore. This bid was selected by the Collaboration's steering group over competitive bids from China and Germany and the SACN is now privileged to host the Steering Group and Centre Directors meeting at CMC Vellore from 7 – 13 April, 2008. The tentative programme is:

Steering group meeting: August 24, 2006

April 7 (Monday) and 8 (Tuesday): *Centre and Branch directors meeting*

April 9 (Wednesday): *South Asian Conference on Evidence Based Health Care*. The SACN will utilise the opportunity to showcase the combined talent of the steering group and centre directors to the region. Depending on the response, the SACN could host this as an annual event with the venue rotating between sites and countries.

April 10 (Thursday): *Sight-seeing/rest day*. A trip to Mahabalipuram with lunch at Fisherman's Cove and a traditional dinner with folk-entertainment at Dakshina Chitra

April 11 (Friday), 12 (Saturday), possibly half or full day 13 (Sunday): *Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group meeting*

It is hoped that with the advance notice that we have, we would see participation from all countries and sites in the region, as well as good audience of health policy makers, clinicians, students, health professionals and the media.

It is also hoped that the proposed centralised research facility at CMC would be ready in time for this meeting to add to the existing infrastructure.

A scientific committee and other committees will be proposed shortly to guide the organisers. Comments and suggestions for the programme for the conference, funding sources (no pharmaceutical companies or device manufacturers), dissemination activities, are welcome.

11. Funding issues

Dr. Prathap informed the group of the proposal to apply for a UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) major award, with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine along with the UK Cochrane Centre (and possibly other UK based Cochrane groups) initiating the proposal and the Indian partners being Dr. Srinath Reddy of the Public Health Forum at Delhi, the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Biology (CCMB) at Hyderabad, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) at Chennai and the SACN at Vellore. This proposal will focus on various aspects of chronic diseases. Since there are only 5 major awards for 500000 £ over five years, we are also submitting a proposal for a standard award for 150000 £ between the LSHTM and the SACN Vellore. This proposal will cover all activities envisaged in the SACN strategic plan but will enable us, if funded, to achieve our targets sooner, with funding written in to support network sites in India. The standard award also envisages a project along the lines of the Sea Orchid project coordinated by Steve McDonald at the Australasian Cochrane Centre and we hope to utilise the experiences and expertise of this exciting project to guide our own version.

Funding sources for other Network sites was also discussed.

12. Publishing issues

Dr. Prathap informed the group of an issue that had been raised by one of the review groups regarding plagiarism in Cochrane reviews. This issue had surfaced in some reviews produced within the developing world and appeared to stem from different

perspectives to intellectual property rights held by developing and developed cultures. This is a serious breach of intellectual integrity as seen in developed societies leading to censure and even dismissal from employment. This is not seen as such a serious offence in some developing countries due to differing views on individual versus collective ownership of some resources, due to financial constraints; an example of this would be differing attitudes within cultures to piracy of books, videos, software programmes etc. Since the SACN is now working in the international arena and reviews produced by member sites have a global readership, it is imperative that international standards are followed within the SACN regarding this issue.

A proposal has been sent by the UK Cochrane Centre to the Collaboration steering group to develop guidelines for use by review authors that will provide definitions, examples, and guidance to prevent plagiarism. These guidelines will be circulated to SACN sites and members. Dr Prathap suggested that this issue be also covered in future protocol development workshops.

13. South Asian Cochrane Centre and Network by 2008

Steve McDonald had proposed that the SACN submits a bid in 2007 to the Monitoring and Registration group to be considered as an independent Centre of the Cochrane Collaboration. Steve suggested that this proposed centre could be called the South Asian Cochrane Centre and Network, and function in exactly the same way as the SACN is functioning at present (and similar to the structure and functioning of the Canadian Cochrane Centre and Network), except that the onus of funding activities would fall on the SACN entirely. The pros and cons of seeking independent Centre status were discussed. Since finding funding is already a responsibility shouldered by the SACN, it was felt that becoming a centre would not jeopardise or alter existing structures or programmes.

Also discussed was Steve's suggestion that the AKU in Pakistan initially, and the University of Kelaniya at Ragama eventually, might wish to be considered Branches of the South Asian Cochrane Centre and Network, if they fulfilled requirements to the satisfaction of the Monitoring and Registration Group of the Collaboration.

The roles and site of the coordinating Centre was discussed and proposals are sought for this. The Prof BV Moses Centre is happy to continue in this role as the coordinating centre with Dr. Prathap as the Director of the Centre and Network. Hopefully, the coordinating site and coordinator have demonstrated their commitment and ability to serve the interests of the network. In this new avatar, it is envisaged that the existing active Network sites will continue to play their important roles and functions. The Prof BV Moses Centre will work towards developing and finding funds for the network sites.

This important issue will be discussed by the steering group in the coming months and an open discussion could be held within the mailing list regarding this and other issues facing us. It is hoped that, if the bid is favourably reviewed by the Monitoring and Registration group, the mid-year meeting at Vellore in 2008 could mark the transition of the SACN as an independent Centre within the Collaboration.

13. Any other matters

a) Advisory Group for the SACN

The Australasian Cochrane Centre's report to the Collaboration regarding the activities of its branches had received positive feedback regarding the SACN. One suggestion made was that the SACN should consider constituting an advisory group. The SACN already has an advisory group that at present comprises Emeritus Professor Valiyathan, currently associated with MAHE, Manipal, and Professor Jayaprakash Muliyl, Dean of CMC, Vellore. Additional members to the advisory groups are required and suggestions included Professor Zulfikar Bhutta from the AKU, senior members of the ICMR, etc. Suggestions for this expanded advisory board are solicited and this matter will be followed up over the coming months

b) Additional Network Sites

Johnson Francis, a cardiologist from Calicut and wife Beena a psychiatrist have a published protocol each and had expressed an interest in developing the Calicut Medical College into a Network site. This was discussed but not approved as the need to develop more sites in geographically unrepresented areas such as the north east and middle India. It may be possible to develop a Network site in Nagpur in the future if someone competent is identified to develop activities there.

c) Links with INCLEN

Dr. Narendra Arora, currently head of INCLEN had expressed an interest to develop closer ties with the Cochrane Collaboration and the SACN. Dr. Prathap is in touch with him but pointed out to the members that any formal links will need to be approved by the Cochrane Collaboration's steering group.

d) Steering group meeting for 2007 in Colombo

Due to perennial difficulties in obtaining visas between India and Pakistan, it was decided to hold the Steering Group meeting for 2007 in Sri Lanka. Dr. Chrishantha was happy to provide facilities if the SACN could fund the meeting. The SACN would also help Dr. Chrishantha to host a workshop on evidence based health care with presentations from the steering group member on the use for evidence in their respective specialities, and render the meeting useful for the host country and site.

Subsequently, Steve McDonald has requested Dr. Prathap in an e-mail that Sally Green and Steve be invited to attend the steering group meeting in Colombo to which Dr. Prathap has readily agreed.

Summary of Action Points and Resolutions:

1. To bring up the issue of increased access to the Cochrane Library with a differential pricing structure at the Developing Countries Initiative meeting at Dublin

Action: Drs. Prathap, Sridharan, Joseph

2. To resume dialogue with the new representative of John Wiley

Action: Dr. Prathap

3. The AIIMS site should attempt to get online access to the Cochrane Library for users in the institution

Action: Prof Kameshwar and Dr. Rakesh Aggarwal

4. The Bharati Vidyapeet Dental University to be removed from the list of SACN sites and Dr. Lele to be asked if he wishes to step down from steering group membership

Action: Dr. Prathap to write to Dr. Lele; Venkatesh to update SACN website

5. The SACN newsletter will from henceforth be published from the coordinating site at CMC Vellore with two issues a year and the first issue to be published after the Dublin Colloquium, probably towards the end of the year.

Action: Dr. Prathap, Ms Zenobia; All members to contribute articles

6. The Developing Country Initiative proposal be circulated to all steering group members and will be put up on the SACN website

Action: Dr. Prathap, Zenobia, Venkatesh

7. Dr. Purvish Parikh to provide details of the response to his offer to host the Cochrane Cancer Network offices at TMH Mumbai

Action: Dr. Parikh; Dr. Prathap will write to him

8. Jawaharlal Nehru Cancer Institute/Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre, Bhopal be removed from the list of SACN Sites

Action: Dr. Prathap will write to Dr. Gopesh and Dr. Manoj; Venkatesh to update the SACN site

9. The current list of active SACN sites in India are:
1. Christian Medical College, Vellore
 2. All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS)
 3. Manipal Institute of Higher Education (MAHE)
 4. Postgraduate Institute for Medical Education and Research (PGIMER)
 5. The Nerve Centre, Chennai
 6. Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai
10. To retain the Independent University as an SACN site for another year and help develop their activities during the year with active participation from the other SACN sites. A sensitization meeting(s) will be held at Dhaka in December 2006 and a protocol development workshop in March 2007.

Action: Dr. Omar Rahman, Dr. Prathap to coordinate SACN members and provide funding

11. A tabulated list of activities required to be conducted by each site as envisaged in the SACN strategic plan to be prepared and sent every three months to update members of ongoing activities

Action: Dr. Joseph Mathew to prepare a draft of the tabulated list and send to Dr. Prathap; Ms Zenobia to send the finalized list all sites every three months

12. A training calendar with details of all training events planned for 2007 to be sent to Ms. Zenobia before November 1, 2006

Action: All site coordinators; Ms. Zenobia to send a reminder by October 15, 2006

13. MOU between SACN and AIIMS and Independent University to be signed and sent to Dr. Prathap

Action: Dr. Kameshwar and Dr. Omar Rahman are requested to follow up on this; Dr. Prathap to initiate request

14. A national level essay competition on Evidence Based Health Care to be organized.

Action: Dr. Sridharan Ramaratnam to coordinate and co-op members to help frame rules, decide eligibility, decide prize, chose topic, decide how to advertise this, select judges and conduct the competition. The SACN

coordinating site will fund this competition and the prize. Ms. Zenobia will provide Dr. Sridharan with the necessary assistance

15. The UKIERI award: updates and any requirements from member sites to be disseminated

Action: Dr. Prathap to follow up and keep members updated

16. All training course within the SACN to address the issue of plagiarism in Cochrane Reviews

Action: all site coordinators; Dr. Prathap will circulate any future guidance from the Collaboration

17. The SACN will host the Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group and Centre Directors mid-year meeting at CMC Vellore from April 7- 13, 2008. A South Asian Evidence Based Health Care workshop will be held on April 9, 2008

Action: Dr. Prathap to constitute committees to help organise this and seek additional funding; suggestions welcome

18. The SACN to work with the Australasian Cochrane Centre to develop a proposal to submit to the Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group in 2007 to register the SACN as an independent centre of the Collaboration in 2008.

Action: Dr. Prathap to initiate discussion within the SACN steering group on the continuation of the coordinating site at Vellore as the Cochrane Centre for South Asia with currently active sites in the region continuing to be Network Sites of the South Asian Cochrane Centre and Network (SACCN). Other suggestions are also welcome

Dr. Prathap to discuss this proposal further with Steve McDonald

Dr. Anita to discuss with AKU members the possibility of the AKU functioning as an independent branch of the SAACN from 2009, if the SAACN does become an independent centre.

19. The SACN will seek to expand its advisory group and seeks nominations from members regarding people who would provide wise counsel.

Action: Dr. Prathap to write to people already nominated; all steering group members to write to Dr. Prathap with nominations

20. The next steering group meeting to be held at Colombo in August/ September 2007. Steve McDonald and Sally Green will be invited to attend.

Action: Dr. Chrishantha to finalise the dates and venue for the meeting and the workshop and provide Ms. Zenobia at the earliest with a budget for hosting the workshop and meeting and for accommodation for steering

group members. Ms Zenobia will circulate these dates to all steering group members and to Steve and Sally.

The meeting closed at 5 pm (after a break at 12. 30 pm for lunch) with a vote of thanks to all the members for their valuable contributions and their attendance at the steering group meeting.

Appendix I

MINUTES OF THE SACN STEERING GROUP MEETING HELD AT THE ACRES CLUB, MUMBAI, 14 SEPTEMBER, 2005

PARTICIPANT LIST

Steering group members

Anita Zaidi, Department of Pediatrics, Aga Khan University, Karachi, *Pakistan*

Chrishantha Abeysena, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya, Ragama, *Sri Lanka*

Kameshwar Prasad, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi, *India*, [Editor Cochrane Acute Respiratory Infections Group](#) and [Stroke Group](#)

Meenu Singh, Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh, *India*, [Editor Cochrane Acute Respiratory Infections Group](#)

Prathap Tharyan, Christian Medical College, Vellore, *India* (**Co-ordinator**), [Editor Cochrane Schizophrenia Group](#)

Purvish Parikh, representing the Cochrane Cancer Network, Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, *India*

Saeed Farooq, Postgraduate Medical Institute Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar, *Pakistan*

Sreekumaran Nair, Manipal Academy of Health Sciences, Kasthurba Medical College, Manipal, *India*, [Editor Cochrane Acute Respiratory Infections Group](#)

Sridharan Ramarathnam, The Nerve Centre, Chennai, *India*, [Editor Cochrane Epilepsy Group](#)

Shailesh Lele, (Editor, SACN news letter), BVDU Dental College & Hospital, Pune, *India*

Invited Guests

Nick Royle, CEO, The Cochrane Collaboration, Oxford, UK

Apologies from:

Omar Rahman, Centre for Health, Population & Development, Independent University, Dhaka, *Bangladesh*

Sue Kim, Country representative, DFID, UK

Steering group meeting: August 24, 2006

1. Welcome and introductions

Dr. Prathap Tharyan, Coordinator, SACN, welcomed the members of the steering group and specially welcomed Mr. Nick Royle, CEO of the Cochrane Collaboration as a special invitee to the inaugural meeting of the steering group of the SACN. Ms. Sue Kim, country representative of DFID, another special invitee was unable to attend.

2. Report of the Network sites

India:

a. CMC Vellore: coordinating site

Dr. Prathap presented the group with the activities of the co-ordinating site since the formal inception of the SACN as a branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre after the exploratory meeting at Goa. The Prof Bhooshanam V Moses Centre for Clinical Trials and Evidence Based Medicine was set up at CMC to coordinate the activities of the SACN. This center was funded by the institution (CMC) and included provision of office space, furniture and infrastructure. The alumni of the Christian Medical College batch of 1959–1960 provided additional funds in memory of their batch-mate, the late Dr. Bhooshanam V Moses, former Professor of Surgery and Principal of the College. Initial staffing and some infrastructure were funded by a grant from *World Council of Churches*: (<http://www.wcc-coe.org/>) to Dr. Prathap Tharyan. Prathap Tharyan is a Project alliance partner and the in country representative for India for *Effective Health Care Alliance Programme (EHCAP)*: (<http://www.liv.ac.uk/lstm/ehcap/introduction.htm>). This is an international research network commissioned by the Department for International Development UK, (DFID) with a grant to Professor Paul Garner, Head of the International Health Research Group at the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine. This network aims is to increase the number of decisions in the health sector in low and middle income countries based on the best available evidence. This funding supports staff salaries and some other expenses of the coordinating site including funding for steering group meetings. The centre also receive funding from a subcontract from the University of Leeds for coding clinical trials from middle and low income countries for Pragmatic Randomized Controlled Trials in HealthCare (Practihc) (<http://www.practihc.org/>) a European Union-funded project which provides open-access tools, training and mentoring to researchers in developing countries who are interested in designing and conducting pragmatic randomized controlled trials of healthcare interventions. Dr. Prathap also presented details of the various presentations held in the country and the region highlighting the work of the Collaboration, the SACN, systematic reviews and evidence based medicine. The center hosts an annual protocol development workshop and a review completion workshop for intra-mural and extra mural participants and also has host of training activities for students from various disciplines. It had a number of publications in the year related to systematic reviews and meta-analysis. The center facilitated the online accessibility to the Cochrane Library via the institutional web-site to all users within the institution. The center's activities are coordinated by M. Zenobia Kangaraj and it employs 5 other staff (4 full-time). There were 12 people in CMC involved in reviews and there were 2 completed reviews, 4 protocols and 10 titles involving authors from CMC.

c. All India Institute of Medical Sciences, New Delhi

Professor Kameshwar Prasad presented the work of the AIIMS site. He is the author of a book on Evidence Based Medicine. There had been a problem getting the MOU signed and it is hoped that with the example of the MOU signed by PGI, a government institution, this problem would be overcome. Dr. Prasad presented the details of workshops and presentations about EBM and outlined plans for the coming year. This includes a plan to obtain an institutional license for the Cochrane Library and workshops.

d. BVDU Dental College and Hospital, Pune

Dr Lele has had limited success with propagating the activities of the SACN but was hopeful of progress. He was hopeful of publishing a newsletter in conjunction with the coordinating site and had a template ready. MOU signed with the SACN.

e. Manipal Academy of Health (MAHE), Manipal

Dr. Sreekumaran Nair, Coordinator- SACN, MAHE Site presented the activities of this site. Five trained faculty members as resource persons for the workshops conducted. Trained faculty members have conducted two sensitization workshops in June and November 2004. 105 members of MAHE and nearby institutions in the region have attended these workshops. Awareness about Cochrane collaboration and Cochrane reviews were created in the region. Protocol writing workshop by Australasian Cochrane Centre and South Asia Cochrane Network was held at Manipal- December 16, 2004. (Twenty participants). Training cum computing facility has been created with 14 P4 systems with internet connectivity and loaded with RevMan and related packages. The Cochrane library online subscription has been obtained. MOU signed with the SACN. Three protocols published in The Cochrane Library. Two protocols have been accepted for publication. Four Draft Protocols Submitted for peer review. Two titles have been registered. One student project completed using Cochrane Methodology. Co-reviewers from UAB, SPH Harvard, CMC and AIHHPH. HIV/AIDS reviewers mentoring program for South Asia in collaboration with HIV/AIDS review group, University of California and South African Cochrane Centre. A programme to mentor reviewers and produce high quality reviews from south Asia with funding from AIDS International Training & Research Program, UAB and the HIV mentoring Programme for reviews in HIV_AIDS is on the anvil.

f. Nerve Centre, Chennai

Dr. Sridharan Ramaratnam presented the activities of this site. A dedicated space with computer facilities and a copy of the Cochrane Library has been created and awareness of EBM and SACN built by presentations at national and regional workshops. Dr. Sridharan had written to the National Board to recognize Cochrane Reviews as a valid academic activity. Dr. Lakshminarasimhan and he are involved in reviews and Dr. Sridharan edits for the Epilepsy group.

g. Post Graduate Institute, Chandigarh

Dr Meenu Singh, Site coordinator presented the activities of this site. After Goa, Dr Meenu Singh in collaboration with the organizers of Pedicon 2005, organized and participated in a session (Debate) on Evidence based Medicine at Calcutta during the

Annual conference of IAP on January 7, 2005. A workshop was conducted for PGI faculty on Basics of Evidence based Medicine, January 31, 2005, inaugurated by the Director PGIMER and attended by 26 participants. Faculty included Dr Prathap Tharayan, Dr Anil Narang, Dr SK Jindal, Dr Firuza Patel, Dr Preveen Kumar, Dr Joseph Mathew and Dr Meenu Singh. Other activities included Evidence based guidelines for Asthma. April 15, 2005; Use of Cochrane Library in WHO- GOI Millennium workshop; Teaching of Evidence based guidelines for Bronchial asthma; Establishment of a telelink between some SACN sites. Staff include Meenu Singh, Joseph L Mathew, Pratima (Research assistant) supported by a grant from St George's Hospital, London, Mr. Raj Kumar, Chief Librarian and Information Officer, other Faculty. Plans include IAP-RPCPH-PGIMER Course on Evidence based Medicine from 30th January, 2006 to 1st Feb 2006 at Advanced Pediatrics Centre, PGIMER, Chandigarh, Funding proposals to ICMR, WHO have been sent. PGIMER has been providing the infrastructural support for teaching activities. Meetings are being organized as a complementary activity to some other organizational activity.

h. Tata Memorial Centre, Mumbai

Dr. Purvish Parikh presented the activities of the site. MOU was signed with the SACN. The Cochrane Library is available for users. A workshop was conducted at TMH on Systematic reviews. A workshop is planned at the Annual Conference of the Indian Society of Medical & Paediatric Oncology at Pune in July 2005. Protocol registration is in progress.

i Jawaharlal Nehru Cancer Institute/Bhopal Memorial Hospital & Research Centre, Bhopal

This site is not yet active and Dr. Gopesh Modi had expressed difficulties in getting activities off the ground. Dr. Manoj Pandey has joined this site. It is hoped that some progress can be made in the future.

Pakistan:

a. Aga Khan University, Karachi

Anita Zaidi, SACN AKU Site Coordinator, presented the activities. In 2003 Dr. Bhutta was invited by the UK Cochrane Center and the infectious disease group to take up reviews of important topics of relevance to developing countries. The Department of Paediatrics sent 3 people (1 research fellow, 2 research medical officers) to Liverpool for training. The Department of Anesthesia also independently got involved and 2 faculty members (Dr. Fauzia Khan and Dr. Hameedullah) got trained. In December 2004, South Asian Cochrane Network was launched in Goa, India, and AKU was invited to join. Dr. Anita Zaidi attended on behalf of AKU, supported by the Dept. of Paediatrics. MOU developed between Cochrane Collaboration, SACN, and AKU. Department of Pediatrics has 2 completed reviews. Department of Anesthesia has 1 review in process. The mission of the AKU Cochrane site will be to promote evidence-based healthcare decision making among clinicians and policy-makers in Pakistan as well as the global healthcare community. This will be done by promoting awareness of systematic reviews of the effects of healthcare interventions and by training individuals in Pakistan in conducting systematic reviews.

The AKU center will undertake a variety of activities in keeping with its mission and with the goals of the SACN. These activities will include individuals at AKU as well as outside AKU and will consist of the following: 1. Seminars and introductory talks on systematic reviews and evidence-based medicine 2. Introductory workshops on Cochrane reviews 3. Review author training workshops 4. Arrange advanced training for selected researchers for complex reviews 5. Ensuring access to online Cochrane Library and providing support to individuals undertaking reviews.

Initial funding for 5 years of activities is estimated to be \$35,000

Includes: First year workshop with trainers invited from abroad, annual workshops, overseas training for selected reviewers, secretarial support, and subscription to the online version of Cochrane Library

Costs of activities in second phase beyond Year 5 are expected to be lower, and to be sustainable through acquisition of grants as well as user fees from individuals seeking training. Proposed logistics: AKU-FHS wide multi-disciplinary steering group of individuals with experience in conducting systematic reviews (initially coordinated by AZ). Initial housing in Pediatrics because infra-structural support and considerable expertise exists within the Department will make coordination of activities easier and efficient.

The following minimum specific outputs can be expected by providing institutional support for AKU to become a Cochrane Collaboration site:

AKU will become a Cochrane site within the South Asian Cochrane Network. 15 individual faculty members from AKU and outside AKU will be trained in Cochrane review methodology per year for the next 5 years; 6 faculty members will develop additional skills needed to become Master Trainers and analysts. A minimum of 2 systematic reviews will be completed by AKU faculty members and/or trainees per year in the first 2 years, and 3 each year in the next 3 years. The MOU was signed with the SACN on September 1, 2005.

b. Post Graduate Institute, Lady Reading Hospital, Peshawar

Dr. Saeed Farooq, site representative, presented the activities. Advocacy at local level is a priority and the Dean has agreed to provide all the facilities for the site. Presentations and seminars about Systematic reviews at PGMI were made.

AT NATIONAL LEVEL: Workshop in the international conference of Gastroenterology planned for Feb, 2005. An Editorial in the JCPSP "The relevance of systematic reviews and Cochrane collaboration to effective health care in South Asia" (S. Farooq, P. Tharyan, CE Adams) published.

A Letter was published in JCPSP. Advocacy at PMDC for the recognition of systematic reviews is ongoing. Dr. Saeed is co-author for 2 protocols and contact author for one protocol.

Future plans include: Involve Pakistan Medical and Dental Council and Pakistan Medical and Research Council; Include Systematic reviews as dissertations for the College of Physicians and Surgeons; Increase Participation of Public Health Professionals; Conduct Training Workshops; Procure subscription to *The Cochrane Library*

Identification of randomised trials published in South Asia and systematic reviews of the conditions is also most relevant.

Sri Lanka

a. University of Kelaniya, Ragama

Currently the Department of Community & Family Medicine is the only site selected for Sri Lanka. Dr. Chrishantha Abeysena is the coordinator. In order to be representative of the entire country, participation from all sectors (Universities, Health Ministry, and professional Colleges etc) is envisaged. A space has been identified in the building currently housing the Physiology Department when the Department moves into the new building. Till such time, the Department of Community & Family Medicine will allocate space to house the site. In addition, the facilities of the computer centre will be available to conduct workshops which would be done outside normal working hours so that undergraduate teaching will not be affected. Library facilities that are currently available to academic staff will also be available.

Financial sustainability

The Sri Lanka Cochrane Network Site Fund (SLCNSF) will be administered by the Steering Committee appointed by the Faculty Board. SLCNSF will have a separate ledger account with the Kelaniya Medical Faculty Development Fund (KMFDF). Income generation is proposed in two ways; by conducting workshops and by way of grants. For grants received the disbursement of funds will be at the sole discretion of the Steering Committee. This will include funds for local travel, stationery, resource personnel, and miscellaneous item such as software etc.

Composition of Steering Committee

Dean, Faculty of Medicine, University of Kelaniya Head,
Department of Community & Family Medicine or nominee

In addition, 12 members of whom at least 5 should be from the Universities and 5 from the Ministry of Health. Priority will be given to persons actively involved in reviews.

The steering committee will appoint a Coordinator from among its members. Workshops are planned on a regular basis.

Bangladesh

a. Independent University, Dhaka

This site is not active as yet, but Dr. Omar Rahman hopes to kick-start activities over the coming year.

Review of the Strategic Plan for the SACN drafted at Goa and activities undertaken by each potential network site in fulfilling the roles to qualify as a Network site
The strategic plan was reviewed and discussed.

4. Update on the Memorandum of Understanding between Network Sites and the SACN

All sites with the exception of the Independent University, Bangladesh and AIIMS have signed the memorandum of understanding. This issue was discussed and plans made to fully enable the signing of the MOU.

5. The SACN Website

Dr. Prathap demonstrated the prototype of the SACN website. Dr. Anita Zaidi expressed concerns about having an URL with an Identifiable Indian extension. A neutral extension was suggested. The website address www.cochrane-sacn.org was thought to be suitable.

6. The SACN Newsletter

Dr. Shailesh Lele offered to continue with efforts to publish this. A template has been developed.

7. The SACN contact database of contributors and review authors

The growing number of reviews and contributors in the SACN were reviewed.

8. The Cochrane Collaborations' response to the tsunami

The Collaboration and John Wiley had made the Cochrane Library available free of cost to countries affected by the tsunami. It has started Evidence Aid as a single stop resource of the effectiveness of interventions in disasters to aid those involved in relief efforts. An article was published in PLoSMed on the response of the Collaboration to the tsunami. For more details: www.cochrane.org

9. National access to the Cochrane Library

A proposal is being drafted by representatives of Wiley in India to get the ICMR and DBT to purchase a national subscription to the Library. A meeting is scheduled over dinner, after the steering group meeting to discuss this further.

10. The Melbourne Colloquium: participation from the SACN

Dr. Prathap Tharyan, from Vellore, Dr. Sreekumaran Nair from Manipal and Dr. Joseph Mathew from Chandigarh will attend the Annual Cochrane Colloquium at Melbourne in October. Dr. Tharyan has been invited as a plenary speaker and will talk on the relevance of systematic reviews to South Asia, pointing out that unless more systematic reviews and pragmatic randomized controlled trials of interventions relevant and feasible to this region are undertaken, the efforts of the Collaboration may only be of peripheral and academic interest to people in this region. He will also present the progress of the SACN in a separate presentation and use the opportunity to establish links with the Sea-Orchid programme and other initiatives the Collaboration. Dr. Nair will present the Manipal-HIV/AIDS group mentoring programme for new reviewers and Dr. Mathew will present the results of a survey of clinicians regarding the relevance of the Cochrane Collaboration's work in India.

11. Visit to Vellore of Sir Iain Chalmers in November after the Melbourne Colloquium and the possibility of holding a national seminar on EBM cum annual meeting of the SACN to coincide with his visit

Sir Iain Chalmers, the moving force behind the setting up of the Cochrane Collaboration, and currently with The James Lind Initiative, will be visiting the Christian Medical College, Vellore on November 4th. He will visit the Prof Bhooshanam V Moses Centre for Clinical Trials and Evidence Based Medicine and give a talk at the Scudder Auditorium.

A national symposium on Evidence Based Medicine and a meeting of contributors of the South Asian Cochrane Network will be held to coincide with this visit

12. SACN bid to host the mid-year Cochrane Steering Group and Centre Director's meeting in 2008

The SACN has been requested to submit a bid to host this important meeting. Various venues were suggested. The SACN endorsed this idea to submit an application for this meeting.

13. National register of controlled clinical trials

The WHO has proposed to set up a single portal to register trials prospectively. Dr. Prathap has been invited to the Scientific Advisory Group meeting of the WHO ICTRP in this regard and the SACN could help with efforts to set up an Indian Trials Register.




















14. Any other matters

The options of new members to the steering group were discussed. Dr. Johnson Francis name was suggested as a possibility. Dr. Manoj Pandey was also proposed.






















The meeting adjourned at 6 pm and was followed by dinner with representatives of John Wiley and the ICMR.























Appendix 2

India - 77 titles registered (39 Titles, 23 Protocols; 15 Reviews)

RG Code	Title	Status	
Hepato-Bil	Adefovir dipivoxil for chronic hepatitis B		P
SR-ENDOC	Adjunctive antithyroid drugs in radioiodine therapy for hyperthyroidism		P
SR-COLOCA	Adjuvant chemotherapy for small intestine adenocarcinoma		P
Renal	Alpha blockers for ureteral calculi		P
Renal	Antibiotic prophylaxis for transurethral endo-urological procedures		P
Infectn	Antibiotics for acute shigella dysentery		T
ARI	Antibiotics for community acquired pneumonia in children		R
ARI	Antibiotics for suspected staphylococcal pneumonia		T
Wounds	Antibiotics for treating burns		T
Neuromusc	Anticholinesterase treatment for myasthenia gravis		T
Epilepsy	Anticonvulsant therapy for status epilepticus		R
Schiz	Atypical antipsychotics for people with schizophrenia and depression		P
Skin	Bacillus Calmette-Guerin (BCG) vaccine for preventing leprosy		T
HIV	Behavioral interventions for reducing the transmission of HIV infection in commercial sex workers and their clients in developed countries.		P
HIV	Behavioral interventions for preventing HIV infection in commercial sex workers and their clients in developing countries		P
Hepato-Bil	Chemotherapy for gallbladder cancer		P
DepAnx&Neur	Cognitive behavioural therapy for somatoform disorders		T
Heart	Cognitive behavioural therapy for patients with implantable cardioverter-defibrillators		P
Inj	Cognitive rehabilitation for disability after traumatic brain		T

injury














Neuromusc	Corticosteroid treatment for chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy		R
Infectn	Diethylcarbamazine regimens for controlling lymphatic filariasis		T
Wounds	Education of health professionals for preventing diabetic foot ulceration		T
Schiz	Educational games for mental health professionals		R
Schiz	Electroconvulsive therapy for schizophrenia		R
Hepato-Bil	Endoscopic variceal ligation versus injection sclerotherapy for prevention of variceal rebleeding in cirrhotic patients		T
HIV	Family support for reducing morbidity and mortality in HIV-infected persons		P
Epilepsy	Gabapentin monotherapy for epilepsy		T
ARI	Heated, humidified air for the common cold		R
DepAnx&Neur	Imipramine versus other antidepressants for depression in children and adolescents		T
Inj	Immediate or early alignment versus delayed management for posterior urethral injuries		P
Heart	Implantable defibrillator versus pharmacotherapy for Brugada syndrome		P
Schiz	Interventions for obsessive compulsive symptoms in people with schizophrenia		P
SR-MUSKINJ	Interventions for treating trigger finger		T
PainPal&Support	Interventions for malignant extradural spinal cord compression		T
Renal	Interventions for preventing recurrent urinary stones in adults and children		T
SR-ENT	Interventions for primary atrophic rhinitis		T
Skin	Interventions for reversal reactions in leprosy		T
Oral	Interventions for the management of submucosal fibrosis		T
HIV	Interventions to modify sexual risk behaviour for preventing HIV infection in street youth in developed countries		P
HIV	Interventions to modify sexual risk behaviour for preventing HIV infection in street youth in developing countries		P

Epilepsy	Lamotrigine add-on for drug-resistant partial epilepsy		R
Schiz	Lamotrigine combined with antipsychotic drugs for people with schizophrenia		P
Neonatal	Long-term versus short-term use of umbilical venous catheters for newborn infants		T
Hepato-Bil	L-ornithine-L-aspartate for hepatic encephalopathy		T
Renal	Low molecular weight heparin (LMWH) versus unfractionated heparin (UFH) for haemodialysis anticoagulation		T
Inj	Mask filters for adults working in industries with high lead exposure		T
HIV	Measles immunization for HIV-infected children		T
SR-ENT	Medical interventions for allergic fungal rhinosinusitis		T
Renal	Methods for collecting urine samples in adults and children with suspected urinary tract infection		P
PainPal&Support	Nimesulide for the management of postoperative pain		T
Infectn	Nimesulide for treating fever in children		T
SR-UPPERGI	Pancreatic enzymes for chronic pancreatitis		T
Oral	Pharmacological interventions for pain in patients with temporomandibular disorders		P
Schiz	Pharmacological interventions for substance dependence in people with non-affective psychosis		T
Neuromusc	Plasma exchange for chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy		R
SR-ENT	Postoperative chemoradiation for head and neck cancers		T
ARI	Pre-admission antibiotics for suspected cases of meningococcal disease		P
Hepato-Bil	Prophylactic variceal band ligation for oesophageal varices in patients with cirrhosis who have never bled from varices		T
Epilepsy	Psychological treatments for epilepsy		R
Infectn	Pyronaridine for treating uncomplicated malaria		T
HIV	Rapid HIV tests for preventing HIV infection in pregnant women		P
Epilepsy	Rapid versus slow withdrawal of antiepileptic drugs for epilepsy		P



DepAnx&Neur	Spiritually focussed or augmented psychotherapy for religious depressed patients		T
SR-ENDOC	Statins for primary hypercholesterolemia		T
Infectn	Steroids for treating cerebral malaria		R
Infectn	Steroids for treating tuberculous meningitis		R
SR-STROKE	Surgery for primary supratentorial intracerebral haemorrhage		R
SR-COLOCA	Surgical intervention for anorectal fistula		T
Prostate	Tadalafil for erectile dysfunction		T
SR-ENDOC	Testosterone for aging men		P
Schiz	Testosterone for schizophrenia		T
Epilepsy	The effects of anaesthetic agents on cortical mapping for neurosurgical procedures		T
ARI	Third generation cephalosporins versus conventional antibiotics for treating acute bacterial meningitis		R
Epilepsy	Vitamins for epilepsy		R
Epilepsy	Yoga for epilepsy		R
SR-ENDOC	Yoga for people with diabetes mellitus		T
Epilepsy	Zonisamide monotherapy for epilepsy		T




Pakistan - 18 titles registered (9 titles; 6 protocols; 3 reviews)

RG Code	Title	Status
Neonatal	Adapted packages for improving essential newborn care in community settings	T
Neonatal	Antibiotic packages for treatment of neonatal sepsis in community settings	T
SR-UPPERGI	Antidepressants for functional dyspepsia	T
Anaesth	Early versus late Pre ICU admission broad spectrum antibiotics for severe sepsis in adults	T
Preg	Effects of interventions for helminthic infections in pregnancy	P



Hepato-Bil	Endoscopic retrograde cholangiopancreatography with or without stenting in patients with pancreaticobiliary malignancy, prior to surgery		P
Infectn	Fluoroquinolones for treating typhoid and paratyphoid fever (enteric fever)		R
Neonatal	Health educational interventions for behaviour change and community mobilization to improve newborn survival in community settings		T
Hepato-Bil	Imidazole derivatives for uncomplicated amoebic liver abscess		T
Hepato-Bil	Interferon-alpha for hepatitis D		P
Epilepsy	Interventions for psychotic symptoms concomitant with epilepsy		T
Neonatal	Interventions for strengthening maternal and newborn health systems in developing country communities		T
Hepato-Bil	Lamivudine for chronic hepatitis B in pregnant women		T
Preg	Multiple-micronutrient supplementation for women during pregnancy		R
Anaesth	Pharmacological agents for preventing morbidity associated with the haemodynamic response to tracheal intubation		P
Preg	Pyridoxine (vitamin B6) supplementation in pregnancy		R
ARI	Short-course versus long-course antibiotic therapy for non-severe community- acquired pneumonia in children aged 2 months to 59 months		P
ARI	Zinc supplementation for the prevention of pneumonia in children aged 2 months to 59 months		P

Sri Lanka - 5 titles registered (3 Titles; 2 protocols)

RG Code	Title	Status
HIV	Interventions for decreasing stigma in people with HIV/AIDS	 T
SR-BEHAV	Interventions using the WHO Health Promoting School Framework for improving health status and academic	 T

	achievement in school-aged children and young people		
HIV	Mass media interventions for promoting HIV testing in developed countries		P
Infectn	Primaquine for preventing relapses in people with Plasmodium vivax malaria		P
Infectn	Single dose ivermectin for lymphatic filariasis		T

Nepal - 2 titles registered (2 reviews)

RG Code	Title	Status
Preg	Antibiotics for syphilis diagnosed during pregnancy	 R
Infectn	Interventions for treating scabies	 R

BANGLADESH - 0 titles registered

BHUTAN - 0 titles registered

MALDIVES - 0 titles registered