



THE SOUTH ASIAN COCHRANE NETWORK

September 14

2005

ACRES CLUB, MUMBAI
(Hosted by Prof. Purvish Parikh on behalf of the
SACN)

Minutes of
the annual
Steering
Group
meeting

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

AGENDA

1. Introductions and welcome to invitees
2. Report of the Network Sites
3. Review of Strategic Plan and achievements
4. Update on the Memorandum of Understanding between Network Sites and the SACN
5. The SACN Website
6. The SACN Newsletter
7. The SACN contact database of contributors and review authors
8. The Cochrane Collaborations' response to the tsunami
9. National access to the Cochrane Library
10. The Melbourne Colloquium: participation from the SACN
11. Visit to Vellore of Sir Iain Chalmers in November
12. Hosting the mid-year Cochrane Steering Group and Centre Director's meeting in 2008
13. National register of controlled clinical trials
14. Any other matters

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:

1. 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 this 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 was 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. We 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.

b. 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.

c. 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.

d. Manipal Academy of Health (MAHE), Manipal

N. Sreekumaran Nair, Coordinator- SACN, MAHE Site presented the activities of this site. Five trained faculty members served 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.

A Protocol writing workshop resourced by Australasian Cochrane Centre and South Asia Cochrane Network was held at Manipal- December 16, 2004. (20 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 was completed using Cochrane Methodology. Co-reviewers from UAB, SPH Harvard, CMC and AIIHPH. 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.

e. 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.

f. 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 Tharyan, 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 Mellenium workshop; Teaching of Evidence based guidelines for Bronchial asthma; Establishment of a tele-link 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, PGIMER has been providing the infrastructural support for teaching activities. Meetings are being organized as a complementary activity to some other organizational activity.

g. 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.

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

This site is not yet active and 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 Anaesthesia 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 Anaesthesia 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 under-taking 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

Cost 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.
- Six 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. Farrok, P. Tharyan, CE Adams) published. A Letter published in JCPSP. Advocacy at PMDC for the recognition of systematic reviews is ongoing. Co-author for 2 protocols and contact author for one protocol.

Future plans include: Involve PMDC and PMRC; Dissertations for the College of Physicians and Surgeons; Participation of Public Health Professionals; Training Workshops; Subscription to *The Cochrane Library*

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

Sri Lanka

a. University of Kelaniya, Ragama

Currently the Department of Community & Family Medicine is the only site selected for Sri Lanka. 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.

3. 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 a 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 PLoS Med 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 randomised 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 highlight the work of the Chandigarh site in propagating the goals of the SACN.

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 date and venue of the next meeting will be finalized and intimated to all members.

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