

**Minutes of Cochrane Collaboration Steering Group teleconference,
23 February 2012**

Present: Maria Burgess (Administrative Assistant, minutes), Jonathan Craig (Co-Chair of the Steering Group), Sally Bell-Syer, Rachel Churchill, Jeremy Grimshaw (Co-Chair of the Steering Group and teleconference Chair), Jini Hetherington (Company Secretary), Gail Higgins, Julian Higgins, Sophie Hill, Lucie Jones (Project Support Officer), Steve McDonald, Mona Nasser, Rachel Sayers (Team PA), Mary Ellen Schaafsma, Denise Thomson, David Tovey (Editor in Chief), Liz Whamond and Mingming Zhang.

1. Welcomes, apologies, declarations of interest, and approval of the agenda

Jeremy welcomed everyone to the call; there had been no apologies. There were no declarations of interest, no additional items of business, and the agenda was approved. It was agreed that all agenda items except item 11 would be discussed before the COU and CEU staff (David, Jini, Lucie, Maria and Rachel) left the call, to allow for the 'in camera' discussion.

2. Co-Chairs' report

- a. Jeremy reported that, following the departure of Nick Royle, the senior operational/administrative leadership position and function within the Collaboration needed to be replaced. An Interim Management Committee had been formed, consisting of David, Harriet, Jeremy, Jini, Jonathan, Lucie and Mary Ellen, to deal with the responsibilities of the CEO. This committee had been meeting on a weekly basis and Jeremy and Jonathan recognised the strain this had put on IMC members and thanked them for their work. He explained that Paul Farenden was expected to complete his report soon, outlining a proposed organisational model. A paper written by the Co-Chairs with specific recommendations regarding the organisational model would be brought to the Paris mid-year meeting.
- b. Jeremy spoke of the loss of Alessandro Liberati and wished to recognise his amazing contribution to the Collaboration during his lifetime. The video and Memory Book were available on the website for people to view and contribute to.
- c. Jonathan reported that events at the UK Cochrane Centre were affecting several people who had made longstanding contributions to the Collaboration (Carol Lefebvre, Nicola McDowell, Caroline Rouse and Phil Wiffen). He recognised their contributions and hoped for their continued involvement with the organisation.
- d. Jonathan explained that the work of FPAP was progressing in a timely manner and would result in papers to be considered in Paris.

There were no questions for the Co-Chairs from other CCSG members.

3. Editor in Chief's report

There were no questions for David regarding his report and Jeremy thanked him and his team for their hard work.

4. Treasurer's verbal report on current financial situation, and cash flow forecast (CFF)

The cash flow forecast was considered and Mary Ellen made brief comments:

- a. The Trading Company royalties had seen a growth of 1.36%.
- b. Currency exchange rates had had an adverse effect on the figures due to the weak GBP.
- c. The Collaboration's reserves had been used to invest in the new Trading Company, Cochrane Innovations.
- d. Charges for the Cochrane Exchange at the Keystone Colloquium had been lower than expected, and at the Madrid Colloquium had been higher than expected; by agreement within the IMC, a line item of 5K GBP annually had been allocated in the cash flow forecast under 'Colloquium-related costs'.
- e. Julian pointed that Infrastructure Methods figures in the CFF had not been totalled; Jini would correct the error.

Action: Jini to amend the cash flow forecast, and colour code it to illustrate 'approved' and 'expected' figures, with advice from Mary Ellen.

5. **Future Publishing Arrangements Project (FPAP): report from the Project Board**

David and Lucie reported on the ongoing work of the FPAP Project Board of which he, Lucie, Harriet and Charlotte Pestrige, a specialist consultant, were members. The project was on schedule for release to tender in early June 2012 and bids would come in late September. A number of publishers had expressed some interest. Jeremy thanked the members of the FPAP Project Board for their continuing hard work.

6. **Thomas C Chalmers Award: Eligibility criteria and abstracts marking**

CCSG members had the following concerns:

- Academic systems in different countries varied considerably, making it difficult to specify exact degree type.
- The reason for suggesting the change to the marking scale had not been explained.
- It was unclear whether all authors of an abstract were required to be eligible to qualify for the Award, or only the first named author. It was thought that the latter should be the case.
- The criteria used for an early-career investigator appear to be too restrictive (not allowing, for example, current PhD students).

After consideration it was agreed to approve the paper in principle, because of the urgency of notifying the organisers of the Auckland Colloquium, but to let Georgia Salanti know that a group comprising David, Julian, Mona and Steve would work with her to refine the eligibility criteria and marking standards before the CCSG could approve the proposed changes.

Action: Jeremy to contact Georgia Salanti to inform her of the decision; David, Julian, Mona and Steve to work with Georgia to address the concerns that had been raised, and circulate the result to the Co-Chairs for final approval.

7. **Auckland Colloquium**

Jeremy referred to the fact that the New Zealand Branch of the Australasian Cochrane Centre had offered to host the 2012 Colloquium in Auckland because the Chinese Cochrane Centre had been unable to gain permission due to recent changes in government policies. Jeremy thanked the organizers in New Zealand for taking this on with such a short timeline. Steve reported that the Scientific Committee had met and discussed possible speakers and that the website was progressing, with registration expected to open in early March 2012. He reported that the

University of Auckland had reservations about signing a Memorandum of Understanding as their Contract Manager was wary of exposing them to liability. It was considered important for there to be a signed MoU; and Steve would send the details to Lucie to see if the University's reservations could be overcome.

Action: Mary Ellen to send the MoU with the University of Laval for the Quebec Colloquium in 2013 to Steve for information, who would forward details of the University of Auckland's concerns to Lucie.

8. EPPI-Centre partnership application

Jeremy summarised the background paper, clarifying that the proposed partnership between the Collaboration and the EPPI-Centre would be for three years, and invited questions and comments. Members expressed the need to manage the proposed partnership actively in order to strengthen and extend the work that had already been carried out by both The Cochrane Collaboration and the EPPI-Centre. After discussion it was agreed to approve the proposal, subject to further scrutiny to ensure the EPPI-Centre received no industry funding.

Action: Jeremy to check that the EPPI-Centre received no industry funding and to take forward the establishment of this partnership.

9. Evidence Aid needs assessment and website vision report There were no questions, and the text of the proposed letter to Mike Clarke was approved, with the exception of the penultimate paragraph which might be able to be deleted if the Lancet paper by Mike and Gerd Antes had already answered the query as to whether Evidence Aid could be used in crisis situations.

Action: Jeremy to consider amending the draft letter and send it to Mike Clarke.

10. Discretionary Fund application: STI Satellite editors' workshop, Bogota

Concerns were raised which centred on potential precedent-setting and the potential long-term sustainability of the STI Satellite. After consideration it was agreed that approval would not necessarily set a precedent as the circumstances were exceptional. The group was located in an area that was under-represented by Cochrane groups, and there had been considerable in-kind investment by the Menstrual Disorders and Subfertility Group. Jeremy explained that there had been discussions with the Co-ordinating Editors and the MaRC, and it was pointed out that it could take several years for a review group to become sustainable. The application was approved.

Action: Jini to notify the applicants.

11. In camera discussion

The staff of the COU and CEU left the teleconference before the 'in camera' discussion of:

- a. Governance of The Cochrane Collaboration.
- b. Implications for senior management structure.
- c. Implications for CEO appointment.

12. Matters arising from CCSG meeting, not appearing elsewhere on this agenda

None.

13. Action items spreadsheet

Members were asked to send their completed actions to Rachel Sayers or Maria Burgess before 12 March in order for the spreadsheet to be updated for the CCSG meeting in Paris.

Action: Everyone to send completed action items to Rachel or Maria.

14. Any other business

CCSG members were asked to send Jini their opinion on electronic versus paper agenda materials before 12 March, when the COU would begin preparing these materials for the CCSG meeting in Paris.

Action: CCSG members to send Jini their preference for electronic versus paper agenda materials before 12 March.

Post hoc note: The IMC agreed that only electronic versions of CCSG agendas would be provided in future, starting with the Paris meeting in April.

15. Date of next meeting:

20th April 2012, Salle du Conseil, Université Paris-Descartes, 45 rue des Saints, Pères, Paris

21st April 2012, Salle Pierre, University Paris-Descartes and University Pierre et Marie Curie, 15 rue de l'école de médecine, Paris

16. Environmental sustainability

This item was not discussed.

Handover of the Monitoring and Registration Committee functions

Authors: David Tovey (DT), Claire Allen

Date: 1 February 2012

In this document we are proposing a timetable for the handover of Monitoring and Registration Committee (MaRC) functions. This document also describes the proposed transition arrangements and a structure and process for future monitoring and registration of CRGs, Centres, Fields and Methods Groups. We believe that the changes do not require additional funding and should be possible without using any of the current resources allocated to the MaRC. In addition, we believe that the timetable proposed is consistent with previously indicated schedules.

Registration

The current situation is that applications for changes to entities (as outlined in the Policy Manual) or new registrations are received by Claire Allen on behalf of the MaRC. She then follows the flowchart which includes a consultation period whereby views of the current MaRC (including David Tovey) and relevant entity executive are sought. If the change relates to CRGs it is usual for David to consult with the Co-ordinating Editors' Executive, particularly when this relates to new registrations or changes in Co-ordinating Editors. Following the consultation, either David or Claire replies to the applicant on behalf of both the MaRC and the Editor in Chief.

We consider that this process is working quite well, and do not propose any changes until after our MaRC meeting in late May.

Currently the MaRC group is unchanged, although Hans van der Wouden's appointment lapsed in October 2011. We would like to ask Hans to continue in the short term, but expect that his role will diminish through 2012.

The same process for other entity types apply, although David is not as heavily involved. Current MaRC members consult with their relevant entity executive before approval is given.

Following May 2012 we intend to appoint an advisory group, comprising some members of the current MaRC (for continuity and organisational memory) and others nominated from appropriate executives. The advisory group will report to David and will be supported by Claire (maximum 0.5 days per week) and a part time (0.4 FTE) admin co-ordinator based in Oxford or London. By 24 September 2012 we will have completed the transition to this structure, which we think will be the model going forwards. We would suggest that this "team" is responsible for all future registration issues in all entity types (rather than having two separate teams co-ordinating monitoring and registration for different entity types as was proposed originally).

Monitoring

Currently, the monitoring process is unchanged and the CEU plays no part at all, except for its nominees on to the MaRC, reviewing reports as per other MaRC members, and attending the three day meeting. We proposed to continue this situation until the May 2012 meeting at the earliest. During that time we proposed to consult on the core functions of Cochrane Review Groups. After May 2012, working with the newly formed advisory group, Claire Allen, the part-time admin co-ordinator, we will work with the CRG Executives to develop the monitoring framework for the 2013 monitoring round. The core principles that we will bring are as follows:

- indicators will be built on the revised core functions
- the monitoring will be 'light touch' - meaning that it will be automated where possible
- where possible the default will be to share information gathered in a transparent manner
- we will incorporate review quality measures
- we will work to develop measures that are fair (not inappropriately influenced by resources) and have the support of CRGs ('how would you know that you were doing a good job?')
- the accent will be on development but also aim to identify CRGs experiencing difficulties or challenges related to carrying out core functions

By the end of 2012, we will aim to have completed the design of the new monitoring plans for CRGs and to have secured support for the process and content. The monitoring round will continue from January (when forms are distributed) - September 2013. A similar process will be conducted towards the end of 2013, to consult with Methods Groups and Fields (including the Consumer Network) and Centres.

Proposed structure of Monitoring and Registration team

Team leader: David Tovey, supported by nominated member of CEU team

Admin lead: Claire Allen

Admin co-ordinator : tba

Advisory group: formed from remnants of MaRC and nominated reps from CRGs and other entity types. Over time the MaRC members will resign, but may need to be replaced by volunteers working alongside those nominated by entity executives, in order to represent authors, for example.

Resource implications: We are confident that the additional post of part time (0.4 FTE) admin co-ordinator can be funded within existing CEU staff resources. This post could be based in at either the CEU office in London or the COU office in Oxford.

Thomas C Chalmers Award: Eligibility Criteria and Abstracts Marking

Document prepared by: Georgia Salanti (Chair, Thomas C Chalmers Committee since 2008), Jill Hayden, Yemisi Takwoingi (members of the Thomas C Chalmers Award Standing Committee).

Submitted to the CCSG

Purpose of paper

- To clarify the eligibility criteria for the Thomas C Chalmers Award and suggest an approach to evaluate eligibility.
- To suggest a change in the scale for marking abstracts.

Urgency

High. The organisers of the next Cochrane Colloquium shall be given enough time to implement the suggested procedures for evaluation of the eligibility of the submitted abstracts.

Access

Open.

Background

The Thomas C Chalmers Committee selects the best oral and best poster presentations on a methodological topic by an early-career researcher at each Cochrane Colloquium. Eligibility of presentations has relied upon the interpretation of the term 'early-career' researcher by the Committee. Perceptions of the Committee can change with time as composition of the committee and contenders change each year. Transparency of the procedures can be improved if a definition for early-career researcher is provided.

Proposal

1. Eligibility

We suggest a specific definition which is in line with those used by many international funding agencies such as the European Research Council, the Australian Research Council and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. We also suggest clarifying that members of the selection panel (either members of the Committee or assessors at the Colloquium) are not eligible for the prize, or agree to withdraw their abstract from consideration.

When submitting an abstract to the Colloquium the authors should declare whether they consider themselves eligible for the Thomas C Chalmers Award ('self-evaluation' of eligibility), and that they would like to be considered for the Award. The committee should make all reasonable efforts to ensure that the recipient of the Award fulfils the criteria.

Definition for an early-career researcher: An investigator is considered to be at an early career stage if have obtained a full time professional degree (MD, DVM, etc.) or PhD degree within the last 7 years; and have not held an academic appointment for longer than the same period of time. Individuals that fall outside of the 7-year eligibility period due to career interruptions or delays for the purpose of childrearing, illness, or health-related family responsibilities or, for health professionals only, have engaged in post-degree non-research related clinical training (residency, etc.), may submit a justification to explain why they feel they should be considered eligible.

OPEN ACCESS

2. Abstract marking

To improve sensitivity of the pre-colloquium screening of abstracts we suggest changing the scale of marking from 0-4 to 0-8.

Resource implications

The organisers of each Cochrane Colloquium need to implement the self-evaluation of the eligibility in the abstract submission form and guidelines.

Impact statement

Clarification of eligibility of the Thomas C Chalmers Award would improve transparency and facilitate the selection process.

Decision required of the Steering Group

To recommend approval of:

- The definition of the early-career researcher
- The self-evaluation step in the selection process for eligibility
- The ineligibility of the Committee members
- The change in the marking scale for abstracts.

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