Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL)

The Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) is a bibliographic database that provides a highly concentrated source of reports of randomized controlled trials. Records contain the list of authors, the title of the article, the source, volume, issue, page numbers, and, in many cases, a summary of the article (abstract). They do not contain the full text of the article.

Cochrane Groups maintain and update Specialized Registers, which are collections of controlled trials relevant to the groups. CENTRAL is comprised of these Specialized Registers, relevant records retrieved from MEDLINE and EMBASE, and records retrieved through handsearching (planned manual searching of a journal or conference proceedings to identify all reports of randomised controlled trials and controlled clinical trials). The Cochrane Collaboration contracts a technology company, Metaxis, to merge the records from the sources outlined above and provide a data feed to the publisher. New and changed data are delivered to the publisher on a monthly basis.

Each of the Cochrane Review Groups and other entities within the Collaboration that submit a Specialized Register is responsible for its content. The Editor in Chief oversees CENTRAL, and Metaxis manages the technical aspects of compiling the database.

CENTRAL is freely available to Cochrane members via the Cochrane Register of Studies Online (CRSO). The CRSO allows searching of CENTRAL records five to six weeks before they are available in CENTRAL and can be accessed with an Archie login.