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CODE OF CONDUCT/ PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION / WORKING TOGETHER FOR COCHRANE: PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION

(Final name of document to be confirmed)

This document has been prepared by the Cochrane Council at the Governing Board's request. It will go through a process of consultation with Cochrane Groups at the 2019 Governance Meetings, and the wider community online. The aim is for the final version of this document to become organizational policy in time for the 2019 Cochrane Colloquium.

1. Introduction

Cochrane's mission is to promote evidence-informed health decision-making by producing high-quality, relevant, accessible systematic reviews and other synthesized research evidence. Our work is internationally recognized as the benchmark for high-quality information about the effectiveness of health care.

It is essential that all those working for, or on behalf of Cochrane, and all our members working around the world, understand the shared values of the organization, and the key principles that promote a collegial environment, effective collaboration and minimize the risk of damaging conflict. This document lays out these principles and describes the kinds of behaviour expected of everyone interacting with the organization, and those that are not be tolerated. These will apply most directly to those who are actual members of Cochrane, but should be understood by anyone else, such as authors or paid contractors, who, though not members, undertake work for Cochrane.

This should not be seen as a way of supressing dissent and debate, both of which are essential for a thriving organization to learn and develop. On the contrary, it should provide a framework to encourage cooperative and effective working practices, to allow safe and constructive discussion of controversial issues, and to protect the wellbeing of individuals and the reputation of Cochrane.

2. The Context

This document needs to be seen in relation to other current Cochrane policies. It is not aimed to replace them but to complement them in describing specific expectations of conduct.

Cochrane's overall principles are clearly articulated and are:

1. **Collaboration** by fostering global co-operation, teamwork, and open and transparent communication and decision-making.

2. **Building on the enthusiasm of individuals** by involving, supporting and training people of different skills and backgrounds.

3. **Avoiding duplication of effort** by good management, co-ordination and effective internal communications to maximize economy of effort.

4. **Minimizing bias** through a variety of approaches such as scientific rigour, ensuring broad participation, and avoiding conflicts of interest.

5. **Keeping up-to-date** by a commitment to ensure that Cochrane Reviews are maintained through identification and incorporation of new evidence.

6. **Striving for relevance** by promoting the assessment of health questions using outcomes that matter to people making choices in health and health care.

7. **Promoting access** by wide dissemination of our outputs, taking advantage of strategic alliances, and by promoting appropriate access models and delivery solutions to meet the needs of users worldwide.

8. **Ensuring quality** by applying advances in methodology, developing systems for quality improvement, and being open and responsive to criticism.

9. **Continuity** by ensuring that responsibility for reviews, editorial processes, and key functions is maintained and renewed.

10. **Enabling wide participation** in our work by reducing barriers to contributing and by encouraging diversity.

The Cochrane Charter of Good Management Practice outlines the expectations of all those in managerial roles throughout the organisation and is based on the following principles:

- Adherence at all times to behaviour and decision-making in accord with Cochrane's mission and principles.
- Working to the highest standards of excellence in order to deliver quality products and services to our users, partners, and other stakeholders.
- A commitment to providing these products and services with the highest degree of efficiency, innovation, and effectiveness to provide maximum impact on health decision-making.
- A commitment to transparency, openness, and accountability in our relationships, communication, and actions.
- Promoting regular participation in a spirit of mutual respect, inclusivity and co-operation.
- Embracing the diversity of thought and perspective represented by all Cochrane members; and encouraging employees and collaborators to offer and use all their knowledge, skills, and experience.

Expectations of behaviour

The following should not be seen as comprehensive, but as examples of the standards of personal and professional behaviour that would clearly be expected of someone who is a member of Cochrane. They should also be understood to be part of the organisation's ethos by anyone who works as a volunteer for, or paid employee of, any part of Cochrane.

Integrity:

- Always act in the best interests of Cochrane.
- Maintain high professional and research standards in respect of:
    - Cochrane's research methods and operational procedures;
    - any other personal professional standards and obligations;
    - regulations of one's employing organisation (e.g. university, hospital or other employer); and
    - understanding the limits of one's knowledge and expertise and seeking training as required.
- Maintain financial probity in respect of the use of any grants from Cochrane or external sources of funding.
- Make declarations of any relevant interests, both financial and non-financial, in accordance with Cochrane's policy, if the role specifically requires it (e.g. authors, editors, Board members). These declarations should be updated when necessary.

Respect:

- Treat all colleagues both inside and outside of Cochrane, with appropriate respect and consideration.
- Maintain an appropriate relationship with those whom you manage or mentor, ensuring that they can work safely and effectively, and develop their skills and knowledge.
- Ensure that colleagues work in an environment free from harassment and bullying.
- All managers should adhere to the Charter of Good Management Practice.
- Academic debate should be encouraged and can be carried out either through internal Cochrane channels or through established public media. Open discussion and reasoned dissent about scientific or policy issues is an important aspect of academic freedom. But what might be perceived as open criticism of Cochrane or of colleagues should only be made after careful consideration and ideally with the prior knowledge of those involved.
- Maintain confidentiality as required both in research and in dealings with colleagues.

Accountability:

- Allow research, professional and managerial actions, personal behaviour at work, and any financial responsibilities to be open to appropriate external scrutiny.
- Accept responsibility for the quality of personal research outputs, managerial work, and other work on behalf of Cochrane.

3. Harassment

The terms harassment, bullying and victimization have specific definitions in different legal jurisdictions, and the following are broad definitions of which notice should be taken.

Harassment is an overarching term that includes bullying and victimisation. A person subjects another to harassment when one behaves towards the other in a way that:

- appears hostile or (passive) aggressive;
- intimidates, degrades, humiliates or offends them;
- discriminates on the basis of specific personal characteristics (such as sex, race, religion); and
- includes unwelcome sexual comments or advances.

Bullying is when an individual or a group of people in a position of power or authority repeatedly and intentionally behave to another person or group of people so that they feel that they are being harassed, and that they are unable to respond or believe that responding would be personally or professionally detrimental.

Victimization is when one person acts in a way towards another that unfairly and directly causes them physical, mental or professional harm or detriment.

All of these behaviours are unacceptable in Cochrane and anyone observing or experiencing them should, whenever possible, deal with the issue through their local resources. If this is not possible or ineffective, they can take the matter further through Cochrane's dispute resolution processes [in development].