



DRAFT FOR MEMBERS' APPROVAL

**MINUTES of the 2022 Annual General Meeting of
The Cochrane Collaboration ('Cochrane'), held online and
in-person at Iberoamerican Cochrane Centre, Hospital de
la Santa Creu, Sant Paul, c/o Sant Antoni M Claret 167
Building 18, ground floor 08025 Barcelona, Spain on 17
October 2022
18.30 GMT+1**

Trustees present:

Ms. Catherine Marshall, Co-Chair of the Governing Board and Chair of the meeting
Prof. Tracey Howe, Co-Chair of the Governing Board
Ms. Karen Kelly, Treasurer

Ms. Yuan Chi, Trustee
Mr. Juan Franco, Trustee
Prof. Sally Green, Trustee
Mr. Jordi Pardo Pardo, Trustee
Ms. Emma Persad, Trustee
Ms. Vanessa Piechotta, Trustee

Mr. Robert (Bob) Dellavalle, Co-Chair, Cochrane Council

Senior staff of the Charity present:

Ms. Catherine Spencer, Chief Executive Officer
Dr. Karla Soares-Weiser, Editor in Chief, the Cochrane Library

Approximately 240 Cochrane members & supporters attended in-person or online.

A video recording of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) is available at:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o-uxD-Vn-qA>

1. Welcome

Catherine Marshall, Co-Chair of the Governing Board, was in the Chair, attending in-person in Barcelona. She opened the meeting at 18:30 GMT + 1 and welcomed everyone attending in-person and online.

Proper notice had been given, quorum was achieved, and therefore this was a duly constituted meeting. She explained the functionality of the videoconference software for those attending; members' questions would be invited in verbal or written form online.

She introduced the agenda and explained the voting procedure. She presented a summary of the Governing Board's composition, work, and legal duties.

2. Approval of the Minutes

The Chair read out the first Resolution on which members would be asked to vote. The results of all Resolutions would be announced after the meeting once all votes had been counted.

The following Resolution was duly approved by the members:

APPROVED RESOLUTION: To approve the Minutes from the last Annual General Meeting, held on 27 October 2021 (160 Yes, 1 No, 14 Abstain)

3. Trustees' Reports

I. Co-Chairs' Report

The Chair introduced her fellow Co-Chair of the Board, Tracey Howe, who presented the Co-Chairs' Report.

She welcomed two new Trustees, Gillian Leng and Wendy Levinson. Outgoing Trustees, Xavier Bonfill, Nicky Cullum, Karsten Juhl Jorgensen, Marguerite Koster and Rae Lamb were thanked for their contributions.

Judith Brodie, who had served as Cochrane's Interim Chief Executive Officer, was also thanked and Catherine Spencer, who had recently been appointed as Chief Executive Officer, was welcomed.

Tracey highlighted the growth in membership and supporters, which had increased to over 100,000. She spoke of the 'listening activity' that had been carried out to survey the Cochrane Community's perception of diversity and inclusivity within Cochrane. She thanked the community for their contributions to this important work and initiatives that would be developed following the survey results.

It was with great pleasure that Tracey announced that a Cochrane Colloquium would be held in 2023, in London, that would celebrate the organization's 30th anniversary and bring the Community together physically again for the first time since 2018. She spoke briefly of Cochrane's ongoing transformation, in light of the Strategy for Change. This would be covered in more detail in the Senior Officers' reports later in this meeting. Finally, Tracey announced the establishment of new Emeritus and Lifetime membership awards, which would be awarded on an annual basis.

In closing, she thanked all members and supporters, Cochrane Groups, the Council, Group Executives, and the Central Executive Team, for their work and commitment to the organization in 2022.

II. Treasurer's Report

Karen Kelly, Treasurer, presented an overview of the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2021 with a view of 2022, and plans for 2023 and beyond.

In 2021, the Charity's income was £7.7 million GBP, compared to £12.8 million GBP in 2020. The decrease was largely due to a one-off financial benefit received in 2020 resulting from the publishing contract for the Cochrane Library with John Wiley & Sons Ltd, which had been agreed that year. Expenditure had continued to be lower than normal, at £9.1 million GBP, due to the impact of COVID-19. The Charity's reserves were £4.2 million at the end of 2021. The Governing Board has ringfenced £4.5 million GBP for strategic investment and to support business continuity. This figure exceeds the level of reserves expected by the UK Charity Commission.

The Treasurer spoke to the income and expenditure to date for 2022. In line with previous years, the planned budget for 2022 was a 'deficit budget', which meant expenditure would be higher than income. This had been agreed by the Trustees in order to fund strategic priorities and would be met by the reserves. However, the forecasted income for 2022 is £8.4 million GBP, and forecasted expenditure £8.3 million GBP, meaning that a 'balanced budget', which would mean that expenditure would be near or less than income, is expected to be achieved. Forecasted reserves are therefore at £4.3 million GBP.

The Treasurer spoke to anticipated funding challenges of 2023 and beyond, and the plans to address these challenges and mitigate risks. She noted:

- The withdrawal of National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) funding of Cochrane Review Groups based in the United Kingdom, in March 2023;
- The new product model (editorial service);
- The impact of Open Access on sales of the Cochrane Library;
- Product development of new and existing products;
- The rising cost of living, due to inflation

The following Resolution was duly approved by the members:

APPROVED RESOLUTION: To receive and note the Trustees' Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st December 2021 (160 Yes, 3 No, 12 Abstain)

4. Appointment of the Auditors

The following Resolution was duly approved by the members:

APPROVED RESOLUTION: To approve Price Bailey as auditors until the conclusion of the next Annual General Meeting (158 Yes, 1 No, 16 Abstain)

5. Council Report

Bob Dellavalle, Co-Chair of the Cochrane Council, presented the Council report. The purpose of the Council was to provide:

- A forum for Cochrane Groups to consider high-level matters affecting Cochrane as a whole;
- A mechanism to raise matters and provide input to the Governing Board on behalf of Cochrane Groups and members; and
- A forum to consider matters at the request of the Board and inform Board deliberations.

He gave an overview of the Council's composition. He thanked outgoing Council members: Geographic Groups representative, Lotty Hooft; Information Specialists representative, Maria-Inti Metzendorf; Methods Groups representative, Sarah Nevitt; and Author representative, Agustin Ciapponi.

In 2022, communication between the Governing Board and the Council had strengthened. In addition to attending Governing Board meetings as non-voting attendees, the Council Co-Chairs also attended the recent strategy meeting held by the Governing board in person. Governing Board Co-Chairs were also attending Council meetings.

In 2022, the Council's work included contributing to the roll out of the new Editorial Management System; providing feedback on the roll out of the Future of Evidence Synthesis plan; and monitoring morale within the Cochrane Community.

In 2023, the Council planned to further improve its communications; partner with the Governing Board and Central Executive Team to redefine its mission and how it operates; work on the 2023 Colloquium preparations and to provide feedback on the transformational changes that Cochrane is undergoing.

6. Senior Officers' Reports

I. Chief Executive Officer

Catherine introduced herself and spoke briefly of her background. She noted that 2022 had been a year in which the organization set the foundations for transformation. She acknowledged that it had been an extremely challenging process and thanked the Central Executive Team and the Cochrane Community for their work.

Catherine gave a brief overview of the progress made against Strategy for Change. She spoke to the new focused strategy that would be developed during 2023, that would consider focusing on the United Nation's sustainable development goals and working with donors to understand priorities, creating a business model to support Open Access, and continuing to transform editorial processes.

Catherine emphasised the need for a transformative approach to allow Cochrane to better respond to important global health needs, streamline the organization's model for evidence synthesis, invigorate funding sources and achieve long-term sustainability.

She also announced the new Director of Development, Gavin Adams, who will work on fundraising opportunities, and thanked her colleagues and the members of the Cochrane Community she had met for welcoming her so warmly to Cochrane.

II. Editor in Chief

Karla Soares-Weiser provided the Editor in Chief's report, which focused on the differences we at Cochrane make in three main areas: producing and publishing evidence in the Cochrane Library, methods standards and supporting authors and transforming the way Cochrane produces evidence synthesis. Karla gave thanks to the Central Executive Team and to the community around the world for their collaboration.

In the first part of the report, the Editor-in-Chief discussed the publication of reviews from 2020 to 2022 and noted that in 2022, Cochrane published 291 new reviews and 186 protocols. The Impact Factor had grown from 7.89 in 2020 to 12.00 in 2022. Karla attributed this success to the collaboration of the Cochrane Community. She announced that of the 8,915 reviews currently in the Cochrane Library 6,362 have been cited in at least one guideline.

In the second part of her report, the Editor-in-Chief emphasised new opportunities available to members. She discussed improving strength capacity in low-income settings and that Cochrane is in discussions with key leaders in the area of equity. Karla announced that Cochrane has launched a new Open Access Journal, *Cochrane Evidence Synthesis and Methods*, which will be open for submission from November 2022.

Finally, the Editor in Chief explained areas in which she would like to work with members on leading the organization through transformation. These would be to streamline systems and processes, improve author experience and increase diversity. This would allow Cochrane to respond better to global health and social care needs and achieve long-term sustainability for the organization. Karla announced the new Thematic Group pilots; following a process of applications of which were 8, these were assessed by a panel of internal and external stakeholders, and so far 3 have been successful and 4 require further clarification. The 3 successful groups are: Health Equity, Nutrition and Physical Activity and Public Health and Health Systems.

The report concluded, with the Editor in Chief thanking members of the community for producing the reviews on behalf of Cochrane.

7. Awards and Prizes

Cochrane awards and prizes were presented, as follows:

Kenneth Warren Prize 2022: Eleanor Ochodo-Opondo

Anne Anderson Award 2022: Tiffany Duque

Chris Silagy Prize 2022: Clare Jess and Gail Quinn

8. Members' Questions and Any Other Business

Questions submitted by attendees during the meeting have been amalgamated where necessary and addressed by topic as set out below:

- **The new Open Access Journal – what will we publish and what is the difference between this and the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)*?**

Karla Soares-Weiser explained that the CDSR is, and will continue to be, Cochrane's primary database. The new journal would look at evidence gaps and scoping reviews, but – as the new journals Editorial Board was recently established and had met once – it is too early to define the type of reviews the journal would publish. A second focus of the new journal would relate to methods studies. Cochrane's methods groups produce a number of methods articles that are usually published elsewhere. The community was encouraged to participate and contact the editorial team with any suggestions for the journal. Karla confirmed that students and Early Career Professionals would be able to contribute to the journal as reviewers and editors.

- **Membership – could members receive a physical lapel badge for being a Cochrane member?**

Catherine Marshall asked the floor to express interest in this idea. Comments received during the discussion raised concerns about whether this would be an appropriate use of funding, as well as the environmental impact of producing such badges. Catherine encouraged members to purchase Cochrane merchandise from the online Cochrane Store, to support and promote Cochrane and awareness of their membership.

- **Cochrane and the Open Access agenda**

Catherine Spencer explained that Cochrane had committed to the Open Access agenda and to making Cochrane's reviews open access by the end of 2025. This pushes Cochrane's agenda to make the organization's evidence even more accessible across the spectrum of users. Open Access is an evolving movement across the publishing community and we will continue to develop ideas to achieve this.

- **Fundraising – how are we working with governments to gain funding?**

Catherine Marshall responded that a fundraising strategy would be developed over the next six months, to provide an approach and materials to enable Cochrane to work more closely with governments and create appealing proposals that would help secure government funding.

- **Thematic Groups – would there be more rounds for applications?**

Karla Soares-Weiser confirmed this and elaborated that in November 2022 5-6 Thematic Groups would be announced, which would be piloted and learned from. The goal would be for 20 Thematic Groups to be established in total. She noted that proposals for Evidence Synthesis Units were also underway, and that it is anticipated that the whole strategy would take 3-5 years for completion.

- **Consumer involvement – can we improve Cochrane's engagement with Consumers?**

Karla Soares-Weiser expressed the hope for Consumer representation on both the Editorial Board and the new journal's separate Editorial Board. She emphasised the importance of improving Consumer engagement and expressed interest in co-production and identifying ways and create mechanisms to achieve this. She noted that to create foundations for this change it would be necessary for the current focus to continue to be embedding the new editorial service, improving the review format and creating efficiencies.

A further comment noted that the Consumer agenda is not part of confined activities but embedded in what we do in Cochrane.

- **Reducing activities – what could Cochrane stop doing – or do less of?**

Catherine Spencer explained that the editorial changes underway would make review production less time consuming and complex. In terms of producing Cochrane's next strategy, an important part of the process would be to consider the activities that Cochrane must undertake, and those that could be reduced or done differently, as well as the pace of all activities. She recognised that the last 18 months had been incredibly demanding for the Community.

- **Transformation agenda**

A comment received was noted: Any changes made as we go forward need to consider the impact on Cochrane Groups and the whole Community. Catherine Marshall responded in agreement, noting that engagement with the Community would be sought to ensure the best way to implement these changes.

9. Date of next Annual General Meeting

The date of the Annual General meeting in 2023 would be confirmed. This meeting would be a hybrid online and in-person meeting, in accordance with the Articles of Association.

Post hoc note: It was later confirmed that the meeting would be held on 4 September 2023.

The Chair thanked the speakers and members for their participation and closed the meeting at 10:30 GMT +1.