Cochrane Council

Meeting by videoconference
2 March 2022; 14:15-16:00 GMT

AGENDA

MEMBERS ATTENDING:

1. Santiago Castiello de Obeso (Early Career Professionals Network)
2. Montserrat Conde (Fields)
3. Robert Dellavalle (Co-ordinating Editors & **Co-Chair**)
4. Ndi Euphrasia Ebai-atuh (Consumer Network)
5. Erik von Elm (Geographic Groups Directors)
6. Vanessa Jordan (Authors)
7. Lotty Hooft (Geographic Groups Directors)
8. Maria-Inti Metzendorf (Information Specialists)
9. Silvia Minozzi (Methods Groups)
10. Stefano Negrini (Fields & **Co-Chair**)
11. Sarah Nevitt (Methods Groups)
12. Gail Quinn (Managing Editors)
13. Ahmad Sofi-Mahmudi (Early Career Professionals Network)
14. René Spijker (Information Specialists)

NON-VOTING ATTENDEES:

15. Judith Brodie, Interim Chief Executive Officer
16. Chris Champion, Head of Engagement, Learning & Support
17. Cinzia Del Giovane, Incoming Methods representative
18. Tracey Howe, Governing Board Co-Chair
19. Lorna McAlley, Executive Support Manager
20. Jo Morrison (Co-ordinating Editors)
21. Karla Soares-Weiser, Editor in Chief

APOLOGIES RECEIVED:

- Lucie Binder, Head of Governance
- Agustin Ciapponi (Authors)
- Liz Dooley (Managing Editors)
- Catherine Marshall, Governing Board Co-Chair
- Jack Nunn (Consumer Network)

The Council aims to ensure that Cochrane Groups retain an effective voice in Cochrane's leadership and strategic decision-making. The purpose of the Council is 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.

The following constituencies are represented by two seats each on the Council:

- Author Forum
- Co-ordinating Editors board
- Consumers Executive
- Early Career Professionals Network
- Fields Executive
- Geographic Group Directors Executive
- Information Specialists Executive
- Managing Editors Executive
- Methods Executive

Declarations of Interest:

Council members must declare conflicts of interest related to their role on the Council, which are published on the Cochrane Community website and are updated annually or when circumstances change: https://community.cochrane.org/organizational-info/people/conflict-interest/council. Participants at Council meetings are also required to declare any possible material interests that could give rise to conflict in relation to any item under discussion at the start of each meeting. All interests so disclosed are recorded in the minutes. Conflicted members may be required to absent themselves from all or part of the discussion of the matter at the discretion of the chair of the meeting.

Use of a Consent Agenda:

A consent agenda groups the routine, procedural, informational and self-explanatory non-controversial items typically found in an agenda. These items are then presented to the Council in a single item, allowing anyone to request that a specific item be moved to the full agenda for individual attention. Other items, particularly those requiring strategic thought, decision making or action, are handled as usual.

Consent agendas are used because they help streamline meetings and allow the focus to be on substantive issues.

Estimated time (mins)	AGENDA:		
	ITEM	INTRODUCED BY:	PURPOSE:
15'	COFFEE (OPTIONAL)		
5'	OPENING BUSINESS:		

	1.	**Welcome, Apologies, Declarations of Interest for this meeting** 1.1. Welcome to Cin Del Giovane, incoming Methods representative	Council Co-Chairs	For information
	2.	**Approval of the Agenda, including the papers and decisions in the Consent Agenda**		For approval
	3.	**Approval of the minutes from 1 December 2021 meeting**		For approval
	4.	**Council Co-Chair Report [VERBAL REPORT]** Including: 4.1. Board and Council Co-Chair matters		For information and discussion
	SUBSTANTIVE BUSINESS:			
45'	**5.**	**Future of evidence synthesis**	Council Co-Chairs Karla Soares-Weiser	For discussion
10'	**6.**	**Recognising the achievement of those leaving Cochrane and/or leaving their current roles** 6.1. Membership & Awards Committee – adding Council members	Vanessa Jordan Chris Champion	For discussion
5'	**7.**	**Cochrane Statement of Values update**	Judith Brodie, on behalf of Euphrasia Ebai-atuh & Jack Nunn	For information
10'	**RECURRING BUSINESS:**			
	8.	**Constituency Reports:** 8.1. Discussion of issues identified as for Council discussion	All members	For information and discussion
	9.	**Any Other Business**	Council Co-Chairs	For discussion
	10.	**Date of next meeting:** https://community.cochrane.org/organizational-info/people/cochrane-council/agendas-and-minutes	Council Co-Chairs	For information
10'		**COUNCIL ONLY TIME**		

Supporting Papers:

1) **AGENDA ITEM 3: Council minutes:**
https://community.cochrane.org/organizational-info/people/cochrane-council/agendas-and-minutes
2) **AGENDA ITEM 5: Future of evidence synthesis documents:**
https://community.cochrane.org/news/plans-2022-and-future-evidence-synthesis-cochrane-governing-board
3) **AGENDA ITEM 6.1:** Membership & Awards Committee Terms of Reference February 2022 (see below)

Consent Agenda:

4) Council End of Year Report 2021 – Governing Board paper GB-2022-03 (see below)

5) Constituency Reports:

Constituency	Report received?	Council paper
Author Forum	-	
Co-ordinating Editors board	-	
Consumers Executive	-	
Early Career Professionals Network	-	
Fields Executive	-	
Geographic Group Directors Executive	-	
Information Specialists Executive	-	
Managing Editors Executive	✓	020322-1
Methods Executive	✓	020322-2

Supporting Papers:

AGENDA ITEM 6.1.

Governing Board Sub-Committee
Terms of Reference

Cochrane's Articles of Association provide the Governing Board with the power to appoint Board Committees, (Sub-Committees) and to delegate to these Committees authority to undertake its duties or functions as required. People who are not Members of the Governing Board may be invited to participate accordance with the role and remit of the relevant Committee (Articles of Association Clause 19.6).

Sub-Committee	Membership and Awards Committee
Purpose	The Membership and Awards Committee is responsible for overseeing admission to Cochrane Membership and in particular for approving Lifetime and Emeritus Membership Awards.
Membership	- Catherine Marshall (Committee Chair), appointed January 2022 - COUNCIL MEMBER (Council) - COUNCIL MEMBER (Council) - Jordi Pardo Pardo, appointed January 2022 - Vanessa Piechotta, appointed January 2022 *Non-voting:* - Chris Champion, Head of Engagement, Learning & Support
Remit	1. **Overseeing admission to Cochrane Membership**

	• This consists of reviewing an annual report of who has been admitted to Membership in the previous 12 months 2. **Approving Lifetime and Emeritus Membership Awards** • This is a decision-making role that consists of reviewing applications for people to be offered these awards on a regular basis
Quorum	Quorum will be a minimum of three voting members.
Meetings	• The Membership and Awards Committee will meet two to three times a year as long as there are decisions required but at least once a year as a minimum to review the annual membership report. • Members will be expected to participate fully in discussions and decisions to allow the committee to fulfill its role and responsibilities. • All decision will be voted on by a simple majority of those present. In the case of a tied vote, the Chair will have a casting vote.
Membership, Reporting and Assurance Arrangements	• Members are appointed by the Board and Council respectively. • The Committee shall be comprised of three Governing Board members and one to two Council members; the committee will be chaired by a Governing Board member. • The Head of Head of Engagement, Learning & Support will be a non-voting member of the committee. • The committee, through its Chair, will provide annual written or verbal reports on its activities to the Governing Board.
Secretary	The Head of Engagement, Learning & Support will be responsible for ensuring notes are taken, so that all decisions are clearly logged and actions captured and monitored. Notes will be circulated to the committee within 10 working days of a meeting.
Review	These Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually. Any changes that are considered necessary will be recommended to the Governing Board for approval.
First prepared	13 May 2021
Last updated	February 2022
Governing Board approved	XXX

Consent Agenda:

Governing Board Paper: Reports

Title:	**Council End of Year Report 2021**
Period covered by this report:	January to December 2021
Date and period of last report:	January to December 2020
Purpose of the report:	A report on the activities and achievements of the Council in 2021; and plans for 2022

Paper Number:	GB-2022-03
From:	Bob Dellavalle and Stefano Negrini, Council Co-Chairs Lucie Binder, Head of Governance
People Involved in the developing this report:	
Date:	20 February 2022. For Consideration at 9 March Board meeting
For your:	Information
Access:	Open

Members changes in 2021:	**Members who stepped down:** • Miranda Langendam, representing Methods Groups, Co-Chair • Craig Lockwood, representing Fields, Co-Chair • Rachel Plachcinski, representing the Consumer Network **Members appointed:** • Santiago Castiello, representing the Early Career Professionals Network • Ndi Euphrasia Ebai-atuh, representing the Consumer Network • Silvia Minozzi, representing Methods Groups • Ahmad Sofi-Mahmud, representing the Early Career Professionals Network • Jack Nunn, representing the Consumer Network **Executive appointments:** • Bob Dellavalle, Co-Chair • Stefano Negrini, Co-Chair
Summary of activities and achievements in 2021:	1) **Improved representation:** The Council established representation from the Early Career Professionals network with two seats. 2) **Informed organizational strategy:** The Council contributed to the 2021 Governance Meetings by providing summarized constituency feedback on the challenges and opportunities for Cochrane [Council paper COU-2021-6]; and input on the topics for the strategic sessions. The discussions at these Governance Meetings informed the final version of the *Strategy for Change*. 3) **Face of the community:** The Co-Chairs chaired the inaugural Cochrane Connects online event in November 2021. 4) **Improved Council-Governing Board connections:** The Co-Chairs met regularly with the Governing Board Co-Chairs to discuss organizational priorities and ensure the Council's voice is considered by the Board. In addition, the two sets of Co-Chairs now attend Board and Council meetings. 5) **Provided operational feedback:** The Managing Editor and Information Specialist representatives provided in-depth feedback to the Central Executive Team on the: 1) rollout of the new Editorial Management System; 2) initial plans on the future of evidence synthesis. 6) **Contributed to working groups:** Council representatives were members of working groups for the following organization initiatives: Editorial Independence and Efficiency project; organizational Monitoring & Evaluation, Diversity Initiative; Colloquium, Meeting & Events. 7) **Improved meeting structure and frequency:** The Council decided on a monthly meeting schedule for 2022, alternating between formal and

	informal meetings in line with the Governing Board's approach. The times will rotate to take account of the Council's global membership. Written constituency reports and a 'consent agenda' have also been introduced to free up more time for substantive discussion during meetings. The Council's agendas and all papers are now published on the Community website, and news items are published to allow members of the community to contribute ideas and issues for Council discussion. https://community.cochrane.org/organizational-info/people/cochrane-council. 8) **Organizational values:** The Consumer Executive representatives on the Council are leading a multi-stakeholder project to establish an organizational set of values.
Priorities for 2022:	1) Support the operationalization of plans to restructure the organization under the *future of evidence synthesis* program of work and ensure the voice of Cochrane Groups is heard as this work is progressed. 2) Reconsider the Council's own role, representation, and terms of reference in light of the changes to the organizational structure. 3) Deliver a set of organizational values for Governing Board approval. 4) Improve Council communications to Cochrane Groups and the wider community. 5) Contribute to the strategy to deliver Open Access to Cochrane Reviews whilst maintaining the financial sustainability of Cochrane Groups and the Charity.
Proposed changes to remit and/or other elements of the Terms of Reference:	**To be made as part of priority 2, above.**

COUNCIL PAPER 020322-1

<u>Managing Editor (ME) Report</u>

Achievements since last formal meeting

The Council ME Representatives have continued to communicate with their member constituents throughout this very difficult period in Cochrane. We circulated a report in mid-January detailing Council activity to our constituents which is something we do on an annual basis. A marked achievement is the increase in correspondence both formal and informal from the ME Community regarding the particularly difficult challenges currently being faced throughout the organisation. We continue to support our colleagues by bringing their queries to the Council. The following queries have been raised for Council discussion:

- Regarding the release of the **Plans for 2022 and the Future of Evidence Synthesis**
  - Please clarify why Cochrane thinks funders will want to fund a thematic hub?
  - Will the Council follow up on the opportunities for "community engagement", as suggested are in place, in the Governing Board email sent Friday 18 Feb 2022? It is unclear what this means, but I note from the timeline that CRGs will be "arranged into thematic groups" from Q2 2022, which is only one month from now.
  - When will the process for registering titles centrally be shared with CRGs?
  - With the planned expansion of the Central Editorial Service, is the expectation that this will be staffed within the UK, or is there scope for editorial staff outside the UK to be absorbed into this team?
  - The new proposed structure reads as though the Central Editorial Service will deal with all reviews before March 2023. Could this please be clarified?
  - What does "immediate move to implementation activities" mean on a practical level? (PDF page 7).

- The thematic groups and Evidence Synthesis Units (which are expected to produce 15 protocols and 30 reviews annually) will not receive any central funding, whereas it is "recommended" that the Central Editorial Service will be funded from income from Cochrane Library royalties in the short term, and then from funding the Evidence Synthesis Units receive in the future. Why was central funding not considered for the thematic groups and Evidence Synthesis Units in the short term? Why will funding raised by the Evidence Synthesis Units then have to fund Central Editorial Service in the future?
- The document states that the thematic groups (which seem to be CRGs under another name) will be responsible for raising their own funds for a role which seems to consist of identifying and recommending priority topics and appropriate authors to the ESUs alongside providing clinical expertise to feed into the reviews/syntheses to ensure clinical relevance and quality. These units may or may not additionally produce their own reviews/evidence syntheses to submit directly to the Central Editorial Service. Has the Governing Board considered who might be willing to fund such units who would basically be supporting Cochrane's centrally funded Evidence Synthesis Units, but largely without their own measurable output? And will the thematic groups be supported in these funding applications?
- How will the model of Evidence Synthesis Units with paid staff including systematic reviewers retain existing/attract new (unpaid) Cochrane authors with sufficient experience to produce quality reviews?
- How much support (which is currently given by the CRGs) will be given to authors whose reviews are submitted directly to the Central Editorial Service and not produced via the Evidence Synthesis Units?
- The document states the aim of streamlining processes, but the new systems (RMW, EM) are not easy for MEs, authors, editors, or peer reviewers, and I have had complaints from several users, some of whom simply refuse to use the new systems and interact with me via email leaving me to sort the system/tasks out as best I can, e.g., by proxying as different people. Amongst the comments I have received (from experienced Cochrane contributors) are "It is quite the painful journey" and "Can you let the developers know that they either sort it out or start paying lay reviewers for their time as they're seriously testing patience!"
- I am interested to know how "Shortening the review format is key to making reviews easier to write and access" can be linked to maintaining methodological quality and producing more complex reviews/syntheses.
- In the example illustrating how Evidence Synthesis Units might work, an international guideline group approaches the Evidence Synthesis Units to commission a series of reviews to inform their guideline. To date in Cochrane (as far as I am aware) it has been the responsibility of the CRGs to identify upcoming guidelines and contact the developers to promote relevant reviews (and update these if needed). The strategy of promoting existing reviews or producing new ones for guidelines is excellent, but why wasn't this supported by central Cochrane before now and any requests/enquiries regarding guidelines directed to the relevant CRGs with central support? I think the lack of clinical expertise at the Evidence Synthesis Units will hamper this strategy and they will be again reliant on the thematic groups (if they exist and cover every topic area) to inform of upcoming guidelines.
- How will the Central Editorial Service be funded going forward after the proposed period using strategic reserves/CLIB revenue? Will the Evidence Synthesis Units need to pay the Central Editorial Service when they submit their reviews? How will this then function for authors submitting directly? Will Cochrane charge them for processing/publishing their reviews as other journals do?
- How will Cochrane define the job description for Managing Editors in the new Evidence Synthesis units? Has a job description been prepared yet? When will it be circulated? (See Table 2 in the document).

- Re implementation of the EMS: which metrics will be used to measure the impact on our workload, and when will the results be made available?
- Even though Cochrane has acknowledged the challenges we face, we must engage with cumbersome processes, complex review models, and an Editorial Management system which is overly time-consuming, unintuitive, and is not in any way designed to address the requirements needed for systematic review production. Cochrane has had to employ extra staff to support the use of EM – if it was a good system, this extra expense would not be needed. In addition, we must use software which does not easily communicate with each other (RMW, GRADEpro GDT, ROB2). All of this leaves many chronically de-motivated and undervalued CRG staff wondering why this new system was thought to be a suitable replacement for the excellent bespoke Archie workflows for our editorial processing.

- The changes to the copy edit and publishing process in EM (including the extra proofread stage) which were intended to streamline the publication process are causing delays to final publication dates. This has a knock on effect for search dates at the time of publication.
- Is Cochrane planning to discuss the NIHR ESP Evidence Synthesis Groups application for NIHR funding https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/225-nihr-evidence-synthesis-groups/29786 with UK CRGs?
- Is the Central Editorial Service applying for NIHR funds?
- Can we have an update on Cochrane's future Open Access arrangements? UK Research and Innovation's (UKRI) Open Access Policy is changing, and the new Open Access policy applies to original research articles submitted on or after 1 April 2022, and the policy change is an important condition of a UKRI grant.

Challenges, including issues for the Council to discuss
The challenges remain the same on the review production side, especially now that the Archie workflows have been archived. The timing of this has been very unfortunate as it coincided with an unusually high number of bugs within the EM system. This would have been less of an issue if we did not have to support our colleagues who are facing devastating job losses. We still lack clear communication on transition plans for those in other contexts impacted by the central changes — for instance, non-UK groups who may be losing funding, and those with sustainable funding uncertain of their place in a new Cochrane model moving forward.

Priorities for the next three months
As reported in December 2021, it remains imperative that we take this opportunity to retain and support the highly skilled and experienced ME community within the new Governing Board approved structure. We will contribute to the current discussions now that the proposal has been made public. In the meantime, our priorities as ME Council Reps will continue to focus on the wellbeing of our constituents, making sure all the initiatives in progress are clearly communicated, and guaranteeing their ideas and comments will be heard, as per the Council remit of ensuring that Cochrane Groups retain an effective voice in Cochrane's leadership and strategic high-level decision-making. This will allow our constituents to fully engage with any matters the Governing Board raises and provide input to inform Governing Board deliberation.

COUNCIL PAPER 020322-2

Cochrane Methods Executive, Methods Groups and Methods Community Report to Council: February 2022

Achievements since last formal meeting
Updates from the Methods Executive and Methods Support Unit
- The Methods Support Unit launched themed web clinics for 2022. On **10 February**, they were joined by Toby Lasserson to discuss developing your implications for research section..
- .The **Methods Executive** is meeting next on **23 March**
- **Cochrane Council new methods representative**. Cinzia del Giovane has been appointed as the new methods representative on the Cochrane Council. The position starts in April/May 2022 (Sarah Nevitt is going on maternity leave in April 2022).
- **Methods Executive co-Chair rotation:** Tianjing Li replaces Carl Moons as new Co-chair from the March 2022 meeting together with Jo McKenzie, who will rotate of at the ned of 2022.
- Senior Research Integrity Editor, Lisa Bero, discusses the subject of "Recent research Integrity : making sure medical trials reported in the scientific literature are real." on a recent article in Nature
- Methods Exec subgroup started developing the topic for **a 2022 Methods Symposium** (which will likely be in October 2022)

Updates from Methods Groups:
- Equity will be hosting a day with Equity Methods Group on **27 April**.
- Over half of the chapters for the new *Cochrane Handbook for Qualitative Evidence Synthesis* are out for initial review (due to publish 2023) (**Qualitative and Implementation**)
- Statistics organised one webinar on NMAstudios: a fully interactive too for network meta-analyses on **10 February.** A second webinar on Quantiles of the marginal and conditional dose-response relation based on weighted mixed-effects models will be on **24 March.**
- **Equity** published a Cochrane Methodology Review on effects on health equity are assessed in systematic reviews of interventions.

- GIN 2022 is calling for abstracts (deadline **18 April**). Anyone interested in proposing a session on evidence syntheses and guidelines should contact Holger Schunemann **(GRADE)**
- **Screening and Diagnostic Tests** have released one more chapter of the new version of the *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Diagnostic Test Accuracy*; chapter 6 on defining the review question.
- **Qualitative and Implementation** hosted a webinar on Making Sense of Framework and Best Fit Framework Synthesis as part of the QES Learning Live webinar series (next webinar is on Thematic synthesis on **24 February).**

Challenges, including issues for the Council to discuss
Comments from the Methods Executive and Methods Groups for Council

Comment 1:
Most of the methods development work in Cochrane has been pro bono and people involved are genuinely enthusiastic about methods work. I don't see a clear role of methods groups in the proposed changes. Who will be pushing the envelope? Will Cochrane lose the methods community as a result?

Comment 2:
Most of the members of the Cochrane Methods Community are not paid directly by Cochrane and essentially, we do our Cochrane work in a volunteer / pro-bono status because they want to and they are passionate about Methods. Without a clear role for Methods in the new Cochrane structure, the risk is losing engagement with the Methods Community.

The Methods Community overall has not yet been very vocal about the proposed changes. This may be because as a Community, currently we have no idea what the proposed changes mean for us. Will our role be essentially the same but within a different structure? Will there be a different role, or a role at all?
More clarity on some of these questions is needed quickly before engagement is lost with the Methods Community entirely. We think some people are feeling alienated and even under appreciated with the lack of specific mention of Methods within the latest Strategy. Without clarity around the role of Methods in the 'new' Cochrane soon, even the most enthusiastic Cochrane Methods people may start to turn their attention elsewhere to spend their volunteer time.

Priorities for the next 3 months
To engage further with the Methods Executive, Methods Groups and wider Methods Community regarding the role of Methods and the Methods community in the future of Cochrane.

Engagement will involve:
- Discussion of the role of Methods and the Methods community in upcoming Methods Executive meetings
- Reflecting upon the Methods Community projects (in depth interviews conducted with all Methods Groups in 2019)