Welcome to our second newsletter

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5 YEARS OF CHMG

Thumbs up for 5 Years Cochrane Haematological Malignancies Group (CHMG)

On 3 October 2005, the Editorial Base of the CHMG celebrated its 5th birthday, and we want all our contributors, supporters and Cochrane colleagues to join us in this happy occasion. But before we lift our glasses and release hundreds of balloons, let's walk down memory lane and have those last five years pass revue.

The Editorial Team thanks all Review Authors, Consumers, Editors as well as the Clinic I University Hospital of Cologne and the Sponsors, for their continued support and collaboration.

FUNDING

The CHMG was successful in securing funds from the BMBF (German Federal Ministry of Education and Research) for two more years from September 1, 2005 to August 31, 2008. This will cover the salaries for a full-time review group co-ordinator, and a trial search co-ordinator.

CLINICAL IMPACT OF REVIEWS IMPROVED

Since last year the research undertaken by CHMG, is widely disseminated to patients and clinicians. Please see also:
- News from JNCI Agreement
- New Databases of CHMG
- Collaboration in CME activities

NEW MAIL ADDRESS

To improve our mail contact we have a new generic mail: info@chmg.de

The Cochrane Haematological Malignancies Group (CHMG) is part of the German Competence Network Malignant Lymphomas project and one of 50 groups that are part of the Cochrane Collaboration. The Editorial Base is in Cologne, Germany. Reviews produced by the CHMG cover health care interventions in the area of defined haematological malignancies using randomised controlled trials (RCT) evidence. The Editorial base is sponsored by the German Federal Ministry for Education and Research (BMBF)

Sponsored by

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THE COCHRANE COLLABORATION®
5 YEARS OF CHMG

by Thilo Kober

Project History

After a call for tender by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in 1997 to establish clinical networks for specific diseases, 160 applications were received. In January 1999, an international panel selected the most outstanding projects. Among these was a submission from a consortium of German cancer experts and science organisations which included Germany's major study groups for Hodgkin's lymphoma, high and low grade non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, as well as experts in pathology, radiotherapy, biostatistics, medical informatics, health economy and clinical epidemiology.

The Exploratory Meeting was held on 17 and 18 February 2000 in Cologne, Germany. There were fifty-two participants from nine countries, representing clinical and basic sciences, biostatistics and epidemiology. Professor Andreas Engert, senior consultant, Clinic I for Internal Medicine, University of Cologne, was unanimously elected as Co-ordinating Editor, a position he still holds today. The CHMG was granted Cochrane entity status on 3 October 2000.

Milestones

October 2001: Germany’s peak scientific funding body, the German Research Foundation (DFG) sponsors a systematic individual patient data (IPD) review, carried out by Jeremy Franklin (Cologne).

June 2002: Positive mid-term evaluation by the project sponsor, the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). The official assessment statement reads “This project is important and overdue in the field of haematology-oncology. It is well organised – the original aims have been fully achieved in the first funding period. First results have been published. The work plan for the second funding period is realistic. The money applied for adequate. Recommendations: Category A. This proposal is recommended for funding for 2 years.”

March 2002: The Editorial Base hosts the 4th Meeting of Cochrane entities in continental Europe, a 2-day with 22 delegates in attendance.

January 2003 – August 2004: Commenced specialised trials register, developed and maintained by the first CHMG Trials Search Coordinator (Gail Higgins, Australia).

March 2003 – December 2004: Receive a 18-months grant from the German Cancer Aid to establish a CHMG Consumer Network. Seventeen German consumers were trained, and some became involved in the editorial process of several protocols and reviews. Consumer Co-ordinators during that time were Sabine Kluge, Nicole Skoetz and Olaf Weingart.

April 2004: Receive a 2-year German Research Foundation (DFG) grant following the joint application with the German National Library of Medicine (ZbMed) to establish a haematology-oncology information portal, hosted by ZbMed. Project ongoing.
April 2004: Agreement with the prestigious U.S.-based Journal of the National Cancer Institute (JNCI) to publish a “Biannual Report” of the Cochrane Haematological Malignancies Group”. Three reports have been published to date. Furthermore, provisions are made to simultaneously feature CHMG generated systematic reviews as peer reviewed journal article in parallel with the Cochrane Library version.

July 2004: Close collaboration with the Department for Public Health and Epidemiology, University of Birmingham, UK to establish a National Institute of Clinical Excellence (NICE) health technology appraisal on Erythropoietin for cancer. Project ongoing.


February 2005: Contracts with Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association (BCBSA) to update one of the U.S. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) evidence reports in collaboration with the BCBSA Technology Evaluation Centre.

August 2005: The group received a further grant from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). As a result, the CHMG is now able to continue with its core function for another 3 years (i.e. September 2005 to August 2008).

Current status
As of 16 October 2005, the CHMG published 8 systematic reviews and 15 protocols. A total of 43 review titles are registered with the Cochrane Collaboration and are in various stages of the editorial process.

Future prospects
With sound funding for at least another 3 years, the CHMG is in an excellent position to consolidate and expand its core activities, i.e. the preparation, dissemination and maintaining of high quality systematic reviews. However, the group has also begun to diversify into other facets of evidence-based medicine, such as the preparation of health technology assessment (HTA) reports and involvement in the establishment of clinical practice guidelines.

EDITORIAL TEAM

NEWS FROM THE EDITORIAL BASE

NICOLE SKOETZ,
one of the former consumer coordinators, left the group to take a new position at the Centre for Coordinating of Clinical Studies Cologne (KKS.

HELGE HÜLSEWEDE
Helge has taken on the role of CHMG Trials Search Coordinator since 1 October 2005 as part of a joint project between the CHMG and the German National Library of Medicine (ZBMed). He has a strong background in clinical data management and is keen to update and maintain the CHMG specialises trials register.

THILO KOBER
After six years in the driver seat, Thilo will leave the group and return to Australia in March/April 2006. The vacant position of RGC has been widely advertised internationally and nationally, and it is hoped to have a smooth transition before his final departure.

Applications close on 15 December 2005. Informal enquiries should be directed to Julia Bohlius: julia.bohlius@uk-koeln.de

CONSUMERS
Due to the failure of our application to secure funding for the continuation of the consumer-coordinator position, we do not have resources for educational or other related projects at present.
However, consumer interested to comment on CHMG protocols and reviews are always welcome and invited to contact us. Comments should be directed at patienten@chmg.de
BECOMING A REVIEWER
FOR THE CHMG

If you are interested in preparing and maintaining a review for the CHMG, please contact our Review Group Co-ordinator for a copy of the editorial policies and other relevant information, and to discuss possible topics.

IMPROVING SUPPORT FOR REVIEWERS

We at the Editorial Base are aware of the amount of hard work that goes into producing a review. Therefore we are committed to giving as much assistance as possible to reviewers. Support and advice is available from the CHMG editorial team throughout the review process, from title development to publication of the full review and preparation of the review’s updates.

As well as maintaining the specialised trials register, the CHMG can assist its reviewers during the review process e.g. by advising which sources to consult or by performing electronic searches in-house for them. The Cochrane Centres organise regular and free training and educational opportunities for reviewers (page 4). Moreover The Cochrane Collaboration has developed open learning materials for reviewers. These are designed to accompany the Cochrane reviewers handbook, have been approved by the Handbook Advisory Group and help you gain the skills you need to complete your review. The open learning modules can be downloaded from the Internet at http://www.cochrane-net.org/openlearning/

NEW REVIEWS, PROTOCOLS AND TITLES IN ISSUE 4, 2005

NEW REVIEW (IN ISSUE 4 2005 ) WILL BE RELEASED AT OCTOBER 16TH

The CHMG currently has 8 published reviews, 15 published protocols and 43 registered titles.
In Issue 4 a new Review from JG Franklin, MD Paus, A Pluetschow, L Specht will be published:

TITLE

Second malignancy risk in Hodgkin's disease patients depends upon the choice of chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy as first-line treatment

SYNOPSIS

Hodgkin’s disease (HD) patients are usually treated initially with radiotherapy alone (RT; early stages only), chemotherapy alone (CT) or combined chemo-radiotherapy (CRT). A meta-analysis of data from 37 randomised trials including over 9000 patients was conducted.
For early-stage patients, CRT resulted in longer survival and longer HD-free survival than either RT or CT alone. Second malignancy (SM) risk was lower with CRT than with RT (no difference in between CRT and CT was demonstrated). For advanced stages, no difference in survival between CRT and CT was established. With CRT, HD-free survival was longer but SM risk was higher.

FURTHER PUBLICATIONS

For publications of CHMG visit our Website: http://www.chmg.de/html/publications.htm

Has one of your Cochrane reviews been published in another format, such as a journal article, or been included in any local, national, or international guidelines?
Then please let us know by contacting thilo.kober@uk-koeln.de or info@chmg.de
HOT TOPICS

News from Cochrane Websites

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (IMS)
The Cochrane Collaboration’s Information Management System (IMS) consists of the specialised software used to support the Collaboration’s electronic infrastructure.
Is now available: http://www.cc-ims.net/

CONTACT DATABASE
As part of the new IMS the Contact Database has been also replaced to Archie

REVMan 4.2.8:
The newest version was released on 8 July 2005. It is a minor service release. Note that the download links changed to the new Information Management System (IMS) : www.cc-ims.net/RevMan/download.htm

THE LATEST UPDATE OF THE COCHRANE MANUAL
(a 245-page document containing the policies and procedures of the Cochrane Collaboration) is now available on the Collaboration website: http://www.cochrane.org/admin/manual.htm

CONSUMER SUMMARIES – WORK IN PROGRESS
For the aim to make the plain language summaries more standard and informative new guidelines for plain language summaries were published in Issue 3 of The Cochrane Library. The process of changing over to the new format will take time and is not expected overnight! The regular updating of reviews will help with this process.
In future the summaries have two fields:
I. A restatement of the title in plain simple language (maximum 256 characters). They do not need to be declarative and include participants, intervention and outcome when these are in the title;
II. Why the review is important: background to healthcare problem, description of intervention(s) and rationale for use; main findings – can use numbers for results, include number of trials and participants; adverse events (and if they are looked for) any limitations of the review (e.g. very specific population, poor methods of included studies).
The summaries and abstracts available in English and Spanish online (Free Access) http://www.cochrane.org/reviews/en/
For CHMG reviews a German translation is also available on our website.
The Cochrane Consumer Network (CCNet) also provides a support system for preparing summaries for review authors and Cochrane Groups that request this.

TRIAL REGISTRATION
The WHO's International Clinical Trial Registry Platform is in the midst of soliciting comments on international norms and standards for trial registration and reporting. They are:
1. finalizing the information that must be reported for a trial to be registered;
2. defining criteria for "valid" registers, and plan to start certifying registers in early 2006;
3. defining a standard process for issuing the WHO CT-UID (Clinical Trial Unique ID) for global unique identification of trials;
4. planning on launching a one-stop search portal for trials worldwide.
The draft policies for points 1 to 3 above are in an Open Comment phase, all of which are on the website. http://www.who.int/ictrp.

IMPROVE CLINICAL IMPACT

News from JNCI Agreement
The 3rd biannual report published as online commentary by the Journal of the National Cancer Institute (JNCI) features one new Cochrane review and protocol as well as a series of recently published randomized controlled trials that were identified through the MEDLINE database. These additional service prepared by CHMG Editorial Base provides an overview and summary of key features of recently published clinical trials in the field of hemato-oncology. The third of these biannual reports was published in August 2005.

As reported, CHMG reviews submitted to the Cochrane Library and targeted for parallel publication in JNCI will be automatically entered in the journals own peer review process. The first of these CHMG reviews was published in April 2005 (1).
New Database of the CHMG

Within the scope of a 2-years funding by the German Research Foundation “Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG)” the CHMG and the German National Library of Medicine (ZBMed) cooperate to develop and maintain a “Specialised Trials Register”. This is a database of randomised controlled trials, and constantly updated, which have been screened according to the guidelines of the Cochrane Collaboration and for their relevance to CHMG. This database contains about 4,600 relevant randomized studies and is included in MedPilot, a virtual library from the ZBMed. It can be used worldwide exempt from charges by researchers and healthcare professionals.

The register is also available for searching on the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL) in the Cochrane Library by using the term SR-HAEMATOL.

Collaboration in CME activities

From 7-9 July 2005, the second course “How to practice evidence based oncology” was held in Bonn / Germany. The course is integrated in the CME (continuous medical education) program of the European School of Oncology (www.esoncology.org).

This course was chaired by two CHMG Editors, Benjamin Djulbegovic and Axel Glasmacher and co-sponsored by CHMG.

The 10 members of the international faculty followed the typical EBM teaching approach:
⇒ Ask a search
⇒ appraise evidence
⇒ summarize (evidence profiles)
⇒ decide (use).

The format was based on short introductory didactic lectures followed by hands-on small group sessions. Unlike traditional EBM course this one has focused on the difference between evidence and decision-making.

The course was attended by more than 30 participants and was well received.

PARMAR LIGHT OR EXTRACTING TIME-TO-EVENT DATA MADE EASY

by Sven Trelle

Time-to-event data (e.g. overall survival) is often an endpoint of randomised controlled trials (RCT) or meta-analyses in oncology. It is generally agreed that the appropriate summary statistic for this type of data is the hazard ratio. The hazard ratio has been specifically designed for comparing two time-to-event curves, because it is a summary statistic which allows for both censoring and time to an event.

In Review Manager two options are available to pool time-to-event data: a modified version of the Peto method for dichotomous data (available for data tables called “Individual Patient Data Outcome” in Review Manager; fixed effect model only) and the generic inverse variance method (both fixed and random effect model). Using the “Individual Patient Data Outcome” option requires to enter values of O-E and V for each study.

⇒ O is the observed number of events of the experimental intervention,
⇒ E is the log rank expected number of events of the experimental intervention,
⇒ O-E is the log rank statistic and
⇒ V is the variance of the log rank statistic.

If you have individual-patient data calculation of these values is straightforward. However, if you are dependent on published data you are often faced with poor reporting and limited available data.

In 1998 Parmar et al. [1] published an overview of methods how O-E and its variance can be calculated from published summary statistics. However, although the methods are relatively simple their description is written from a technical perspective making it difficult for non-statisticians to use them.

At the last Cochrane Colloquium in Ottawa a group led by Lesley Stewart presented various approaches to these methods. In order to facilitate data extraction they developed a simple Microsoft Excel sheet. This spreadsheet accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation explaining the sheet is available at the Editorial Base of the CHMG on request. With the help of the spreadsheet, O-E and its variance can be calculated if one of the following sets of values are available: (1) hazard ratio + confidence interval (2) hazard ratio + number of events (3) p-value + number of events (4) Kaplan-Meier curves (indirect estimate by ’chopping up’ the curves).

A workshop led by L. Stewart and D. Ghersi from the Medical Research Council and the Breast Cancer Group respectively will be held in Melbourne on Tuesday, October 25.

**TIMETABLE**

**NEXT WORKSHOPS**

For upcoming Cochrane Workshops worldwide, please see [http://www.cochrane.org/news/workshops.shtml](http://www.cochrane.org/news/workshops.shtml)

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<td><strong>Protocol and Analysis Workshops - Sydney, NSW, Australia</strong></td>
<td>8 - 9 Dec 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>German region</td>
<td><strong>Developing a protocol &amp; Getting a review into RevMan</strong></td>
<td>Spring 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td><strong>Cochrane Review Author Training, Montreal, Quebec</strong></td>
<td>30 Nov - 1 Dec 2005</td>
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<td><strong>4th Canadian Cochrane Symposium, Montreal, Quebec</strong></td>
<td>2 - 3 Dec 2005</td>
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<tr>
<td>UK and Ireland</td>
<td><strong>Developing a Protocol for a Review, Liverpool, UK</strong></td>
<td>6 Dec 2005</td>
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<td><strong>Introduction to Analysis, Liverpool, UK</strong></td>
<td>7 Dec 2005</td>
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<td><strong>Developing a Protocol for a Review (2 days), Oxford, UK</strong></td>
<td>10 - 11 Jan 2006</td>
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<td><strong>Introduction to Analysis, Oxford, UK</strong></td>
<td>12 Jan 2006</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Developing a Protocol for a Review, York, UK</strong></td>
<td>28 Mar 2005</td>
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**SELECT EVIDENCE-BASED HEALTH CARE EVENTS**

For further upcoming events worldwide, please see [http://www.cochrane.org/news/calendar.shtml](http://www.cochrane.org/news/calendar.shtml)

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<tr>
<td><strong>13th Cochrane Colloquium : Melbourne Australia</strong></td>
<td>22 – 26 Oct 2005</td>
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<td><strong>3rd Annual Guidelines International Network (G-I-N) Conference, Lyon France</strong></td>
<td>05-07 Dec 2005</td>
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<td><strong>Sixth Annual Campbell Collaboration Colloquium, Los Angeles, California</strong></td>
<td>22- 24 Feb 2005</td>
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<td><strong>14th Cochrane Colloquium, Dublin, Ireland, 23-26 October 2006</strong></td>
<td>23-26 Oct 2006</td>
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**SUBMISSION DATES**

Please remember that editorial processing takes at least 8 weeks, and that any items should be sent to us in plenty of time. Obviously the sooner you can get things sent to us the better.

Deadlines for submitting items for the next libraries:

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<td>IV 2006</td>
<td>2 August 2006</td>
<td>23 August 2006</td>
<td>18 October 2006</td>
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MEET THE CHMG

13TH COCHRANE COLLOQUIUM
October 22-26, 2005
Melbourne; Australia

For more than ten years, the work of the Cochrane Collaboration has led to impressive advances in our understanding of how to prepare systematic reviews and promote them to a wide audience. Cochrane Colloquia are occasions to reflect upon these achievements and at Melbourne the scientific program of plenaries, workshops, papers and posters will focus on the challenges that remain in these areas and provide ample opportunities for people to learn and participate. If you are interested in the work of CHMG you can meet Julia, Thilo and Sven during the colloquium. CHMG invite to meet us during the breakfast with the Entities Session at Melbourne Convention Centre on Sunday, 23 October 7:45am - 9:15am

EDITORS
Benjamin Djulbegovic, USA
Andreas Engert (Co-ordinating Editor), Germany
Axel Glasmacher, Germany
Ralph Meyer, Canada
Sue Richards, UK
Lena Specht, Denmark
Keith Wheatley, UK

47TH ASH ANNUAL MEETING
December 10-13, 2004 Atlanta; Georgia

Each December, the Society's annual meeting provides hematologists from around the world a forum for discussing critical issues in hematology. In cause of Hurricane Katrina the 2005 ASH Annual Meeting, originally to be held in New Orleans, has been rescheduled for December 10-13 in Atlanta, Georgia. Nearly 20,000 clinicians, scientists, and others expected to attend the four-day meeting, which consists of a superb educational program and cutting-edge scientific sessions.

COMMENTS AND CRITICISM EDITOR
Volker Diehl, Germany

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Please send any questions, comments or suggestions to this newsletter to:
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