

Electronic news bulletin of the Cochrane Occupational Health Field
Issue 5, October 2009

Contents:

1. Upgrade from Field to Review Group
2. Learn more about Cochrane review methods
3. ECOSH workshop articles now available online
4. Assistance needed in understanding non-English language articles
5. "Evidence of no effect" is not the same as "No evidence of effectiveness"
6. CC Fields' core functions discussed at CC Colloquium in Singapore
7. Database highlight: Ergonomic improvements for hairdressers
8. Current status of COHF databases
9. Next issue of the COHF news bulletin

XX

1. Upgrade from Field to Review Group

We have initiated the process of changing our entity status in the Cochrane Collaboration from Cochrane Occupational Health Field to Cochrane Occupational Safety & Health Review Group.

We feel this is a necessary change because occupational health and safety reviews require expertise that many of the disease-oriented review groups do not have. We on the other hand know very well that in OSH interventions are usually complex, randomisation is often difficult and the perspective of a worker is quite different from that of a patient. And since it is the review groups that have all the power in the Cochrane Collaboration and fields can only advise, our position has been rather frustrating at times.

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health will continue to host us. If all goes well we will be recruiting editors from among OSH review authors and specialists from universities and national institutes as well as practitioners and consumers. We will also form an advisory board with representatives from various international OSH agencies and associations.

The change process starts with three exploratory meetings. The first will be held in Singapore this coming week.

If all three exploratory meetings provide sufficient support, a formal application will be presented to the Monitoring and Registration Group in May 2010. Progress reports will follow in future issues.

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2. Learn more about Cochrane review methods

Advanced Cochrane Reviewers' course, November 5th and 6th, 2009 at FIOH in Helsinki
The program will consist of lectures and group work about:

Review project management, Data extraction, Quantitative versus qualitative data synthesis, Combining continuous and dichotomous outcome data (e.g. rates and means), Combining results data from Interrupted Time-Series studies, Producing Summary of Findings and Risk of Bias tables, Using Grade Profiler.

Registration no later than October 15, 2009 through course secretary Niina Karinen,
phone number: +358 30 474 2631, e-mail: niina.karinen@ttl.fi. More information at: www.cohf.fi.

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3. ECOSH workshop articles now available online

The EcOSH project is funded by the EU's Seventh Framework Programme to shed more light on the economic dimension of OSH. To this end, we have organised three expert workshops. The first one on OSH and productivity was held in January in Helsinki and resulted in three articles in the Scandinavian Journal of Environmental and Occupational Health. One article elaborates a case study in a firm, one is a systematic review of business cases and one is a discussion paper on the effects of OSH measures on productivity. The papers can be found online at: www.sjweh.fi.

The presentations of the second workshop about economic evaluation that was held in Amsterdam in September are also now available online [here](#).

The third workshop deals with Economic Incentives for Safe and Healthy Workplaces and will be held in Bilbao, Spain on the 16th of November 2009. We will go through the fundamentals of economic incentives and evidence for their effectiveness or non-effectiveness. Those who are interested in participation can indicate this through the website at: www.ecosh.eu.

XX

4. Assistance needed in understanding non-English language articles

The COHF database of intervention studies and our OSH systematic reviews do not exclude articles because of language.

However, our own language abilities can stretch only to English, Dutch, German, French, Finnish and the Scandinavian languages. In order to really live up to our goal of all-inclusiveness we would like to recruit people fluent in languages other than the major western ones to help us. These people should be willing to read no more than a few articles per year and to either 1) code them according to study design and occupational health outcomes for our database or 2) determine whether they fulfil the inclusion criteria for a particular review. For example at the moment we haven't found anyone able to help with articles written in Japanese or in Turkish.

If you are fluent in a non-English language not listed above and would like to help out, please contact the editor.

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5. "Evidence of no effect" is not the same as "no evidence of an effect"

This may seem like a trivial difference but for many studies it is not trivial at all. If there is evidence that an intervention is not effective we should stop practising it. If there is no evidence of an effect, we should first do more research.

In general, it is more difficult to assess if there is no effect of an intervention than to assess if there is an effect. We rely heavily on statistical significance here. If there is no statistically significant effect there can still be a wide range of uncertainty about possible effects depending, among other things, on sample size. A very small study with a non-significant outcome would not be very convincing in showing that there is no effect. It is important to look at clinical or practical relevance of the effect as well.

For example, this is important for studies that try to show that workers who are exposed to noise but wear hearing protection have hearing levels equal to workers that are not exposed. This is a nice research design in which the intervention can be evaluated without the need of an exposed but unprotected control group.

If you want know more about how such studies were incorporated into a Cochrane Review on noise reduction click [here](#).

XX

6. Core functions of fields discussed in Singapore

If you would like to inform the recipients of this newsletter about important matters (e.g. conferences, publications, job vacancies, etc.) please submit your items to the editor at: jani.ruotsalainen@ttl.fi and include "COHF Newsletter" on the subject line. Unless you request otherwise, your submissions to the COHF Newsletter may be duplicated in other regular Cochrane Collaboration news channels such as Cochrane News and the Cochrane Collaboration web site, at the discretion of the editors. Please consider the environment before printing this newsletter.

Kind regards,
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