

2. Development of COHF databases and web pages

With such results as described above it was clear that we couldn't just dump the BA studies without risking the COHF database becoming almost entirely useless to some of its present users. We therefore decided to isolate the BA studies into their own section (or "library") within our database. Now instead of the previous two databases (intervention studies and reviews) there are now three: EBM studies, BA studies and reviews. We also provide a disclaimer on our web pages (www.cohf.fi) saying that the BA studies should NOT be used to draw inferences about the effectiveness of treatments. On the quick search page you still search all three databases at once and on the advanced search page you can pick one of the three.

Our web pages have also been revamped. Take a look at www.cohf.fi and please give us your feedback if you can think of ways they could still be improved.

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3. Prioritisation of review topics: results from a FIOH workshop

In September last year we held a workshop at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health where we discussed the matter of prioritising review topics. Thus far we have tried to cover the whole area of occupational health and safety and reviews have been initiated mainly due to funding opportunities or personal interest.

We had two presentations about the quantitative criteria used to prioritise health technology assessments and Finnish current care guidelines. Important criteria in both systems were: the number of patients, the economic consequences of the intervention, discrepancies in existing knowledge and the expected improvement in terms of quality of life.

What effect will this have on our work? It is clear that we have to establish more close links to policy makers and consumers such as unions and employers to get a clearer picture of priorities they set. Until then we will continue our current policy of funding and personal interest.

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4. AGM held in Sao Paulo

The meeting was attended by Floris van der Laar from the Primary Care Field and some twenty Brazilian occupational health professionals such as the charismatic Dr Hamilton Lima Wagner. As the only representative of the COHF attending the Cochrane Colloquium I chaired the meeting. I gave an overview of the Field's activities including our reviews, database, newsletter and ways in which people could participate. The rest of time was spent discussing evidence-based medicine and its possible benefits in Brasil.

All the plenaries of the Cochrane Colloquium are now available as podcasts or as audio or slides only at:

<http://cochrane.org/podcasts/brasil/podcast.htm>

Gordon Guyatt's, Lorne Becker's and Muir Gray's talks are especially recommended.

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5. Recently published occupational health reviews

5.1. Prevention of voice disorders

Plain language summary

People in occupations where voice use is central, such as teachers, are more at risk of developing voice disorders. The definition of voice disorders and their possible causes as well as the best methods for preventing them are still being debated. There is also no consensus on the best method of evaluating the voice, although many consider auditory voice quality assessment as a gold standard measure. Voice training is used both in treatment and in (secondary) prevention of voice disorders. Voice training usually consists of a combination of direct and indirect treatment techniques. Direct techniques focus on the underlying physiological changes

"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.

Kind regards,
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