

This Site I Like

Cochrane Summaries: a new tool to verify medical conclusions about healthcare interventions

(<http://summaries.cochrane.org>)

Keeping up-to-date with the latest research is a daunting task for health professionals. It is even more challenging for scientific editors, expected to cover a wide array of health topics. A comprehensive search of the literature is beyond the scope of most journalists, so that verifying before publication can be a problem. The Cochrane Collaboration has attempted to address this by bringing together teams of independent experts who conduct and publish reviews of the best available evidence drawn from around the world.

Cochrane contributors evaluate and synthesize research in all aspects of health care by mining the existing research to find and summarise the best possible evidence and identify research gaps. The systematic reviews produced through this process evaluate the beneficial and harmful effects of specific medical and healthcare treatments, medical devices, and also Public Health and community based interventions. This information is presented in systematic reviews, known as *Cochrane Reviews*, which are updated periodically to account for new evidence and are published online in *The Cochrane Library* (www.thecochranelibrary.com).

These reports have been available for many years. However, full reviews are often far too technical and lengthy to be useful for the typical editor who needs to review several topics at one time. For healthcare treatments to be accurately reported by journalists and scientific editors, more concise summaries written in language that is accessible to people without technical training are required.

The Cochrane Summaries project <http://summaries.cochrane.org>

The aim of this project is to provide readily accessible information from Cochrane Reviews in shorter summaries that can be quickly consulted to verify health claims. The Cochrane summaries website was developed to improve access to both the summaries and also to provide other useful background information.

Advanced search technology. The site is powered by a Google-type search engine, which is aided by a suggestive, 'did you mean?' feature to improve the accuracy of your results. Search keywords are automatically linked to meta-tags that correlate to specific health topics in the database. The summaries can be viewed with optimal presentation on a variety of internet-friendly devices, including handhelds.

Browse by health topic. For a broader search of the database, the website features additional browse options by demographic characteristics, or any of The Cochrane Collaboration's 53 specialty health areas.

Multiple databases. Each summary provides a link to 'Find the research' which directs the user to the full review in *The Cochrane Library*. In addition, complementary tools

support each summary, such as author podcasts, recent news articles about Cochrane Reviews, and the Cochrane Journal Club's discussion forum.

Author podcasts. For selected reviews, audio casts created by lead authors are available, often in multiple languages. Podcasts are tailored to provide information about the significance of the topic and the reasons for conducting that specific review, in addition to the results of the review.

Cochrane in the News. To support editors' efforts to publish unique perspectives, each summary has a link to the most recent news articles published referencing the Cochrane Review.

Cochrane Journal Club. This online forum provides even more information about the topic by including discussion questions, PowerPoint slides with key figures and tables, and the potential to communicate with the authors.

Continuous growth

Cochrane Summaries is continuing to improve, from refining the details of which content should appear in the summaries to developing further resources for the website. Popular health topics, such as depression, dementia, asthma, and others, are being developed into portals where all the relevant information on those health issues can be presented together.

The Collaboration believes that access to information should not be restricted by language. Therefore, the website is in the process of being translated into the official WHO languages. Spanish and French are nearly complete.

Despite only having recently been launched, the Cochrane Summaries website has received global attention. This reached a pinnacle when The Cochrane Collaboration was awarded the runner-up trophy for the best public website by the Plain English Campaign. Each year, a handful of the best (and worst) examples of plain language are publicly honoured by the Plain English Campaign. The Campaign reviews documents and websites to ensure that public information is presented in a clear fashion. Websites are judged for their content, design and layout. A spokesperson for the Campaign indicated that Cochrane Summaries earned the 2011 runner-up award because of its unique ability to use plain language summaries to communicate the results of medical research.

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