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RSM Library Database Guides / 06

# About the Cochrane Library Helpsheet



## What is the Cochrane Library?

The Cochrane Library is a collection of databases providing the best available evidence generated through research about the effects of healthcare to inform decision-making and practice. There are 3 main databases in total including the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews and the Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials.

## Background

Work on the Cochrane Library began in 1992 following the development of the NHS Information Systems Strategy. Three major initiatives formed part of the strategy:

- UK Cochrane Centre
- Centre for Reviews and Dissemination
- National Research Register

The UK Cochrane Centre (Oxford) worked closely with the Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (York) to produce the Cochrane Library.

## UK Cochrane Centre (UKCC)

The UK Cochrane Centre was established at the end of 1992 to support and co-ordinate the work of the Cochrane Collaboration in producing and maintaining systematic reviews. There are a growing number of Cochrane Centres around the world.

## Cochrane Collaboration

The Cochrane Collaboration is a global, independent network of individuals committed to producing and maintaining systematic reviews on the effects of healthcare. Contributors are affiliated to the Collaboration through 53 Cochrane Review Groups which focus on specific topic areas.

## Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD)

The Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD), based at the University of York, both conducts and commissions reviews of healthcare interventions. It supports the review process through the production of guidelines and training on how to produce good quality reviews. CRD produced and maintained the Database of Abstracts of Reviews of Effects (DARE), Health Technology Assessment Database (HTA) and the NHS Economic Evaluation Database (NHS EED) as part of the Cochrane Library's original suite of databases. On 7 August 2018, these 3 databases were retired from the Cochrane Library.

## What is a Systematic Review?

A systematic review is defined as "a review of a clearly formulated question that uses systematic and explicit methods to identify, select, and critically appraise relevant research, and to collect and analyse data from the studies that are included in the review. Statistical methods (meta-analysis) may or may not be used to analyse and summarise the results of the included studies." (<https://community.cochrane.org/glossary> [accessed 7 November 2018])

## What is a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT)?

A randomised controlled trial is "an experiment in which two or more interventions, possibly including a control intervention or no intervention, are compared by being randomly allocated to participants. In most trials one intervention is assigned to each individual but sometimes assignment is to defined groups of individuals (for example, in a household) or interventions are assigned within individuals (for example, in different orders or to different parts of the body)." (<https://community.cochrane.org/glossary> [accessed 7 November 2018])

## The Cochrane Library

The Cochrane Library is the 'best single source of reliable evidence about the effects of healthcare.' It contains information on the effectiveness of interventions that include drugs, therapies, diagnosis, screening, the organisation of healthcare and health promotion. It does not contain information about general aspects of healthcare, causal, prognosis, epidemiology or statistical information.

The Cochrane Library is made up of 3 main databases:

1. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR)
2. Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL)
3. Cochrane Clinical Answers (CCA)

The Cochrane Library is owned by Cochrane and published by Wiley.

(<https://www.cochranelibrary.com/about/about-cochrane-library> [accessed 7 November 2018])

## Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (CDSR; Cochrane Reviews)

CDSR is a full-text database containing protocols and completed Cochrane Systematic Reviews on the effectiveness of healthcare interventions prepared by Cochrane Review Groups in the Cochrane Collaboration. The reviews are regularly updated and represent the

highest level of evidence to support healthcare decisions. Completed systematic reviews are indexed in Medline and Embase.

The results of searches in the Cochrane Library are divided between full Cochrane Reviews and Cochrane Protocols of reviews in progress.

## Cochrane Central Register of Controlled Trials (CENTRAL; Trials)

CENTRAL contains bibliographic citations (some with an abstract) of thousands of randomised controlled trials or controlled clinical trials. These have been identified by Cochrane Review Groups from bibliographic databases, hand searching journals, conference proceedings, ongoing trials registers and pharmaceutical companies. There is a large overlap between this database and Medline/Embase.

## Cochrane Clinical Answers (CCA; Clinical Answers)

CCA is designed to provide concise non-statistical overviews of the most clinically relevant results of Cochrane reviews to inform decision-making at the point-of-care. Each CCA is based on either a single Cochrane review or an overview of Cochrane reviews with most addressing the same clinical question as the Cochrane review. The content of CCAs are peer-reviewed by practising clinicians and updated when the original Cochrane review's conclusions change.

## Publication Frequency in the Cochrane Library

CDSR is published daily, CENTRAL monthly and CCA weekly.

## Accessing the Cochrane Library

The Cochrane Library can be accessed remotely from the **e-Resources** page on the RSM website: <https://www.rsm.ac.uk/e-resources.aspx> by logging in to the **Databases** using your registered RSM username and password. Once the databases opening screen has loaded, click on the **Cochrane Library** link in the bottom right corner. Alternatively, go directly to: <https://www.cochranelibrary.com>.

If you are based in the UK, free full-text access to Cochrane reviews is available by any of these access points. For a list of National Provisions (countries or regions where everyone has free full-text access), click on **Access Options** from the **Help** drop-down menu on the top purple toolbar found on every Cochrane Library webpage.

## Navigating within a Document

The content of the 3 databases are fully integrated in the Cochrane Library providing direct links between them, where available.

### Navigating within a Cochrane Review

When you open a review, the abstract is displayed first. Use the right hand navigation panel to navigate directly to a section of the full-text of a review by clicking on the

appropriate link. The **Summary of Findings** table is a good place to start to get an overview of the results of the whole review. For quick access to **Figures** (odds-ratio diagrams or Forest plots) and **Tables, References** (with links to the trials' records appearing in CENTRAL or PubMed, where available) and **Related Content**, click on the appropriate links on the bottom of the navigation panel. The **Related Content** section provides a link to the **Cochrane Clinical Answer** for the review, if available, as well as links to other Cochrane reviews, protocols, topics, podcasts and guidelines related to this particular review.

### Navigating within a CENTRAL record

A CENTRAL record provides bibliographic details similar to those found in databases such as Medline for a published (or unpublished) trial. Click on **How Cochrane used this article** in the right hand navigation panel to find out which Cochrane reviews have included or excluded the trial from their analyses. It will also provide details of the PICO and risk of bias analyses for the trial in the listed reviews via a subsequent **Show how this review used this CENTRAL record** link.

### Navigating within a CCA

The title of each CCA is a **Clinical Question**. When you open a CCA, the **Clinical Answer** appears at the top with a clinical bottom line in bold followed by a short non-statistical overview. The **Comparison** section lists outcome data from the Cochrane review regarded as the most relevant to practising healthcare professionals. Click on the **Expand All** link by a comparison to view the quality of evidence, narrative result, relative effect or mean difference, absolute values (where available) and odds-ratio diagrams (Forest plots) for each outcome listed. The **Patient-Intervention-Comparator** characteristics are also available underneath the list of outcomes for each comparison. To view the full evidence from the original Cochrane review, click on the **Related Content** link in the right hand navigation panel.

## Epistomonikos

**Epistomonikos** (<https://www.epistomonikos.org>) is a health evidence database containing bibliographic references to more than 200,000 published systematic reviews including links to related publications (e.g. overviews of reviews, structure summaries, primary studies). The Cochrane Library's search interface allows users to search Epistomonikos, in addition to their own databases. Results are available on the **More** tab after using the Basic Search box on the Cochrane Library's homepage only.

## Further Information

A helpsheet is also available on how to search the Cochrane Library. Please ask at the Library Enquiry Desk or access the helpsheet online at: <https://www.rsm.ac.uk/library/e-resources.aspx>

For further information about the Cochrane Collaboration, visit their website at: <https://www.cochrane.org>

**Please contact us if you require any further assistance using the databases or wish to book a tutorial. Contact details are provided in the banner of this helpsheet.**