

Case Study: Influencing medical practice in India

'Killer' fact

The results of Cochrane Reviews are made available in accessible summaries for medical staff working in primary care in India.

Summary

This is an initiative to help doctors in India access up-to-date reliable research evidence to inform their practice. DFID funded Effective Health Care Research Consortium partner – the South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre supports a project to address issues of lack of access to expensive journals and the internet. Every two months, a collection of research abstracts of Cochrane Reviews, Evidence Updates and Practical Evidence About Real Life Situations (PEARLS*) are collated in *Current Medical Issues*, a journal produced by the Continuing Medical Education Department of the CMC in Vellore, India and sent out to over 1000 doctors located in various rural and urban areas of the country. Also included alongside the summaries are contextual comments about the relevance of the information to India compiled by members of the faculty from the CMC.

The publication is well received and feedback reveals that these summaries of Cochrane Reviews are read and are influencing the practice of the doctors. The readers have sent in anecdotes about how their practice has been affected and have also asked thought-provoking questions, which are then passed on to faculty to be answered. This has resulted in a dialogue between the doctors in peripheral hospitals and the faculty at CMC and some of these are featured in the 'Readers Write' column of *Current Medical Issues*.

Feedback from one of the doctors working in a mission hospital says, "It is very difficult for busy doctors in short-staffed hospitals to keep abreast of what is happening in the medical world. Besides we cannot subscribe to journals and do not have easy access to the net. The Cochrane Network has done a fine job of summarising evidence and *Current Medical Issues* brings us the concise information in an easily readable format so that we too, working in the rural areas can practice evidence based medicine".

Prathap Tharyan, Director, South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre says, "It is gratifying to read the feedback from clinicians who clearly find these evidence summaries a useful way of accessing reliable evidence they might not otherwise have access to about the effects of interventions to improve health outcomes".

*PEARLS are succinct summaries of Cochrane Reviews for primary care practitioners

Impact

Over 1000 doctors currently receive *Current Medical Issues* allowing them accessible access to Cochrane Reviews. Patients directly benefit from this increased knowledge base. Also, specialists at the CMC, Vellore, who provide the commentaries that accompany the summaries benefit by having to read, summarise and contextualise the Cochrane Reviews. The Effective Health Care Research Consortium partner, the South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre, is now evaluating different ways in which evidence summaries can be presented for different audiences. This will inform decisions on improving their utility.

This initiative is an example of a regular and effective uptake route for research products produced by the Effective Health Care Research Consortium and The Cochrane Collaboration and delivered in India by Consortium partner, the South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre. The project is successful as it provides much needed information about some of the latest health research in an accessible format for doctors and other medical staff in India. Providing this information in print/journal format means that doctors do not have to rely on perhaps sporadic and often non-existent access to the internet.

Further information

Cochrane Reviews

<http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/index.html>

Evidence Update

<http://www.liv.ac.uk/evidence/evidence.htm>

PEARLS

<http://www.cochraneprimarycare.org/en/newPage1.html>

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