Andy presentation

**Background**

Medical Director and Medical Research and Development Lead wanted to encourage more of the Doctors and other staff to undertake systematic reviews.

Persuaded myself and a colleague to attend a Cochrane Systematic Review course in Nottingham in June 2019 – 5 days- 4 nights.

The course was designed to take the attendees through the process of undertaking a Cochrane Systematic Review. The course was brilliant with outstanding facilitators!

The aim behind my attendance was so that I would be able to understand the process more fully so that I could guide and work with our own staff if they were to undertake a Cochrane Systematic Review (or a systematic review).

**What did I learn?**

Loads. I was particularly interested in the lit searching elements and this tended to confirm the methods we follow. This was actually very reassuring! I found the discussion around inclusion and exclusion criteria for deciding upon the papers intriguing as well as the data extraction – the sheer depth was incredible and particularly the bias and the methodological quality elements of the included papers The course went through all the remaining parts of the process most of which was over my head but I picked up that there was software and support from Cochrane for these stages.

**What else did I learn?**

Understanding the process has helped me to clarify with our own staff how to respond when they state they would like to do a Cochrane Systematic Review.

Familiarisation with the method of existing Cochrane Reviews is really helpful.

Don’t start to develop a protocol without first emailing and talking through with lead for the area of clinical interest. Cochrane is sub divided into Specialist Groups.

That Cochrane have to prioritise their scarce funds in providing support and that they will turn down requests that don’t fit the priorities, where the skills mix doesn’t ensure the review is doable or more preparation is needed for the protocol.

Having a team to share the workload is advisable.

If you can’t undertake a Cochrane Systematic Review there is the possibility of undertaking a non Cochrane review but borrowing from the methodology that a Cochrane review would involve.

**Involvement in a Systematic Review**

Clinical R&D lead wanted to undertake a Systematic Review. We discussed this and started to put a protocol together. We decided it wasn’t appropriate for it to be a Cochrane Review but we wanted to follow as much of the methodology as possible.

Carried out an initial scoping search after we decided that actually it wasn’t going to be a Systematic Review but a Scoping Review after all.

We then adapted the search criteria following the scoping search and the full search was undertaken. Mainly this was to change from title and abstract to any field.

My colleague then consulted a national figure to ask whether he may be interested in peer reviewing further along the line. The response was more than positive and the national figure suggested involvement and asked us to consider further strands. These were good suggestions. Ran an amended search incorporating additional terminologies.

Time allocation to date – probably significant underestimates here

Discussion before we began 5 hours

Scoping search 11 hours title and abstract

Main search 11 hours any field (Bear in mind I am quite slow)

Sifting titles and abstracts for full text to be sought 5 hours

Sorting discrepancies between 2 staff 2 hours

Sourcing full text 14 hours so far – about 4 hours to go I would think

Data extraction – not going to be involved in

Writing up article – don’t know how long this will take

**Observations and lessons learned so far**

Time factor major issue – fortunately we just about have the capacity in our team but many teams won’t.

Be more diplomatically insistent about identifying aspects of the process that won’t work rather than assume clinician knows best – example – non English papers!

We amended the process part way through. Fortunately, we didn’t have to repeat the whole process again. The more time spent on preparation the greater the chance of seamless progress. However, even the best laid plans aren’t always enough. One of our team left the organisation part way through – not related to this project I might add!

Am I glad to be involved – yes!

Has it developed my skills – yes and definitely sharpened them.

Would I welcome other systematic reviews? – yes but would offer to the team first so that the enjoyment could be shared around.

Might change my mind after we have finished the review and written up and sent off for publication.

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