

**Methods Coordinating Group Meeting
Oslo, Norway
Wednesday, May 20, 2009**

ATTENDEES

Philip Abrami, Josephine Alumanah, Robert Bernard, Eugene Borokhovski, Karianne Hammerstrom, Angela Harden, Sung-Dong Hwang, Merete Konnerup, Mark Lipsey, Terri Pigott, Ralf Schlosser, Ian Shemilt, Russell Taylor, Carole Torgerson, Peter Tugwell, William Turner, Erin Ueffing, Jeff Valentine, Anne Wade, Bernd Weiss, Vivian Welch, Oliver Wendt.

ACTION ITEMS

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- **ERIN** to circulate '*Guiding Principles and Policies for Methods Subgroups of The Campbell Collaboration*' to members with a request for further comments; vote to be subsequently held on adoption.
- **ERIN** to finish assessing whether Cochrane Handbook covers methods used in two exemplar Campbell reviews ("mapping exercise"); **TERRI/PETER/ERIN** to draft summary report and send to Subgroups; **SUBGROUP LEADERS** to review relevant sections of Cochrane Handbook and compare with their methods.
- **ERIN, PETER, RYAN, AND TERRI** – once agreed on their assessments – to send mapping exercise to Cochrane Handbook authors for input with cc to MARK LIPSEY.
- **JEFF** to follow-up on videotaping workshops and potential online materials.
- **INFORMATION RETRIEVAL GROUP** to make an official request or recommendation to the Methods Advisory Group for adopting the Search Strategy Checklist across Campbell; **METHODS ADVISORY GROUP** will discuss and then move forward as appropriate to the Steering Committee.
- **PHIL** to send draft of rapid review document to Methods members.
- **TERRI** will write a draft proposal for next steps for methods review process and discuss with **METHODS ADVISORY GROUP** whether an external reviewer for the protocol is always required.
- **METHODS MEMBERS** to contact TERRI if available to do peer review.
- **METHODS ADVISORY GROUP** to start draft on Observational Studies policy brief. **TERRI** to send email to Methods Members to invite to participate (including **MARK PETTICREW**).
- **METHODS MEMBERS** invited to consider appropriate submissions for the new Wiley journal on Research Synthesis Methods

DISCUSSION POINTS

TERRI welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for coming.

UPDATES FROM SUBGROUPS

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- IAN reported on his work on the Methods Bylaws
- The Economics Methods Group and EPPI-Centre have developed a new web-based tool for adjusting estimates of costs drawn from two or more sources, and originally expressed in different currencies and price years, to a common target currency and price year (<http://eppi.ioe.ac.uk/costconversion/default.aspx>).
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 - The Economics Methods Policy Brief is very new (April 2008) and it was written with a practical focus for use by authors of Campbell reviews; it describes the key components of a methodological framework for incorporating evidence on economic aspects of interventions into C2 Reviews and proposes methodological standards for the economics components of C2 Reviews

Training – Jeff

- JEFF reported that the Training Group held 2.5-day workshops in Toronto, Oslo, Cairo
- Working on training materials for Campbell website
- Workshop in the fall planned, likely North America, maybe Europe

Information Retrieval – Karianne

- Mailing list established
- Working on policy brief; will update existing
- Permission from Cochrane to use Chapter 6 of Handbook
- Would like to include a checklist for reporting searches, developed by ANNE
- Would like to participate more in training; ANNE gave a workshop here at the Colloquium

Equity – Peter

- Working on website
- Described priority-setting work related to systematic reviews
- Looking at four approaches that have been published – putting these together with an equity lens
- Invited the group to join us in testing or trying out these approaches
- Variety of methodology discussions: subgroup analyses, implications of different study designs
- Working with WHO CSDH MEKN, developing a manuscript
- Looking at knowledge translation and how information can be presented for different stakeholders

Process and Implementation Subgroup – Terri (on behalf of group)

- KARIN HANNES and MARGARET CARGO will be revitalizing the group

Two dormant groups: Research Design Methods Group and Statistics Methods Group

BYLAWS FOR METHODS GROUP AND METHODS SUBGROUPS

- TERRI thanked IAN for his work on the Bylaws
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- IAN informed the group that the methodologists within The Cochrane Collaboration plan to develop proposals for changes to the infrastructure that supports methodological input to Cochrane reviews, including Methods Groups.
- IAN raised the idea that we hold off on voting on adoption of the 'Guiding Principles and Policies for Methods Subgroups of The Campbell Collaboration' document until implications of/ lessons from proposed changes to the Cochrane methods infrastructure can be considered/ integrated.
- PETER advised that, given the length of time that Cochrane may take to implement any changes, we should go ahead with sharing the current 'Guiding Principles and Policies for Methods Subgroups of The Campbell Collaboration' document amongst members of the C2 Methods Groups with a request for further comments, to be followed by a vote on its adoption, and to update this as needed in response to future developments within Cochrane. Ian agreed to this.

UPDATE ON THE PROPOSAL TO ADOPT THE COCHRANE HANDBOOK

- TERRI identified the need for more guidance for review authors to write reviews. It has been proposed that the Cochrane Handbook be adopted by the Methods Group as its official guidance document, with supplementation and additions as needed to reflect the specific methods and processes used in Campbell. The Methods Advisory Group (Doug Altman, Harris Cooper, Larry Hedges, Julian Higgins, David Moher, and Hannah Rothstein) has been consulted on this and they have advised that we do adopt the Cochrane Handbook but that we supplement this for Campbell authors, with chapters or policy briefs on areas not covered in sufficient details or needing examples from the Campbell wider remit.
- ANNE: A note of concern. She noted that Chapter 6 on searching is completely different in Campbell than in Cochrane. If we adopt the Handbook, will people be going beyond them to the Briefs?
- JEFF: The policy briefs were written by very high level academics for very high level academics. Identified that Information Retrieval is very new and practical. But in general, they are not written for authors. Two options: create our own or adopt another's. Expensive and time-consuming.
 - We would need at least twice as many briefs as we currently have.
- TERRI: We have briefs on statistics, research design, information retrieval, economics.
- MARK LIPSEY: Hope that there will be parallel work this year. Recognition that we need to work on the information sent to reviewers. Policy briefs are outdated. Definitely need some work. Proposed two step process: 1) review handbook for relevance and gaps; and 2) then we can

develop a central guiding template (examples of protocols and reviews). Identified set of new books on methods written by various Campbell members: Littell, Hedges,

- PETER and TERRI agreed that this is a great idea. Requested that Subgroups look at the relevant sections in the Handbook and map it to their group's methods.
- IAN: great to identify areas where there is a significant difference between Cochrane and Campbell Methods. Noted that this was discussed last year, and very little progress has been made.
- MARK will be chairing a Campbell group this year. Mark wants the resources to be sorted out by next year. We need resources available for those who are writing reviews.
- TERRI noted that both she and Peter are on the subcommittee.
- MARK says the question of the Cochrane Handbook cannot be avoided.
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- VIVIAN: Would be very useful to get input from the authors of the Cochrane Handbook on the mapping exercise.
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TRAINING

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- ROBERT described work that he does with interns who are doing online materials – could we get their assistance in preparing something for Campbell?
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- TERRI asked JEFF if he would be able to follow-up on this. BJORN TOMMY has advised us that we should update our website. TERRI asked JEFF to see what sort of materials we could put online efficiently.
- MARK suggested that we work backwards: what would be ideal? How much money would it cost? Can we fundraise?
- TERRI and JEFF will follow up with the training group.

TOOLS FOR REVIEWERS

- Need for tools for reviewers particularly around searching. ANNE described the checklist for search strategies. It is a checklist that she uses when she reviews other people's search strategies. QUERY: is this something that the Steering Committee should review and approve and adopt across the Collaboration?
 - JEFF suggested that the Information Retrieval Group should make an official request or recommendation to the Methods Advisory Group, which will discuss and then move forward as appropriate to the Steering Committee.

RAPID REVIEWS

- ANNE updated the group. Last year, PHIL brought this up.
- There was a request for standards for rapid reviews.
- MARK: Campbell is an open process. The Methods Group can recommend a process for rapid reviews. This is probably not a good time for Campbell to get into rapid reviews. First and most important step is to make sure that we've got the peer review process down. Especially, is there any way that we could start to speed up the process and become more rapid?
- ANNE: This came out of a particular review that the group has done. There's a fear that everyone is doing rapid reviews with no standards or guidelines for methods and process. Campbell is anxious to get reviews done – maybe this is one mechanism? Always knowing that it's about quality first, though. Noted that in PHIL'S paper, there's a table that outlines some of the weaknesses in reviews that have been conducted.
- PHILIP: We need to communicate that ... The Steering Group wants to maintain its standards for reviews
- MARK: That's the way it is now, but there may come a time when we have a prototype for a Campbell rapid review.
- Videotaping workshops?
- PHIL offered to share his draft with the Methods Group. There is a need to faster reviews, but we don't want to confuse the standards that Campbell is trying to set.
- MARK: perhaps there's a tie-in with the policy briefs and/or templates. We're trying to streamline the process, not necessarily lower the standards. Different material in a different framework: working on expediting the process. Keep the rapid review idea in mind, and see if streaming makes the basic Campbell review move faster. Whether there's a variant of that....
- ANGELA said that there was a presentation on rapid reviews at Cochrane a couple of years ago – EPPI Centre etc.
- PETER encouraged us to discuss this in the context of specific examples where Rapid Reviews can be done with sacrificing quality.

STREAMLINING THE METHODS REVIEW PROCESS

- TERRI notes that Steering Group is struggling with the time it takes for peer review. TERRI noted that the Methods Group sees every protocol and review that goes through Campbell.

- The Steering Group has suggested streamlining this process in some way. Giving editor the right to triage who is going to need more work and assistance. Right now, each protocol also has an external reviewer.
- BOB: Is there a revision between Group internal reviewer and Methods Group reviewer?
- EDUCATION GROUP: If substantial problems arise, the editor will have to do a lot of work. So there's an individual judgment depending on the most efficient process.
- JEFF: Not every group works that way. Could become cumbersome if the groups do different things. Maybe only ¼ - ½ are okay to go. You'd establish a process that may not save that much time.
- MARK: Basic decision made by the Methods Editor, rather than the content editor.
- JEFF: Carole said that some of the groups have already covered the review. Duplication?
- CAROLE: says that she doesn't want to see weak reviews get sent to the Methods editor and/or external review – waste of qualified time! Noted that with many of the Education reviews, TERRI won't get them until they're already in good shape.
- JEFF: As the Editor, TERRI does a few a month. Would bet that the input that TERRI gives by herself is of tremendously high quality. When you review many, you get better and faster! But a second set of eyes is also helpful.
- TERRI: says that she can look at the protocols, but doesn't feel comfortable editing all of the full reviews.
- Request from the Steering Committee. TERRI will write a draft proposal for next steps for process. JEFF suggested looking at official procedures for whether an external reviewer for the protocol is required.

REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS TO REVIEW

- TERRI seeking volunteers for review teams! If you're interested in doing peer review, please let TERRI know so that she expand her list of reviewers. If you're done within three weeks, you get \$300. If done within four weeks, you get \$200.
- IAN noted that all C2 Methods Groups members can by default be considered part of the pool of potential volunteers to undertake methodological peer review of Campbell protocols and reviews, since the criteria for membership status includes "the willingness, availability and relevant expertise to assist with the work of the MGs. This work can include, but is not limited to: serving as a methodological referee for protocols and reviews..."

OBSERVATIONAL STUDIES

- MARK advised considering in terms of a policy brief on how Campbell can do reviews on observational studies. Does the group have any objections to doing that? Would the Methods Group be willing to help put this together?
- PETER suggested that MARK PETTICREW and WILL SHADISH would be good to work on this.
- TERRI will ask for volunteers to think about observational studies in the next note to the Methods listserv.

- MARK indicated that his working definition of observational studies includes types of studies that utilise econometric methods, such as those which estimate the impact of school size and/or class size on school performance/attainment.
- IAN reported that the Economics Methods Group is considering a proposal for a workshop series on econometrics and research synthesis, which is likely to include material of relevance to MARK's planned work on observational studies, and agreed to liaise with MARK to ensure that relevant material from the workshops can be used to inform his work.

OTHER

- MARK: commercial pitch: noting that Wiley is doing a new journal on Research Synthesis Methods. Mark is a co-editor. Will be launched in 2010. Methodology defined very broadly. Invites everyone to think about anything that might be appropriate.

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