



WELCOME to the very first issue of the Cochrane Hepato-Biliary Group's newsletter (CHBG Newsletter). We intend to produce it twice a year or as often as there is news to tell, problems to share and tasks to solve. The CHBG Newsletter is to be edited by the Editorial Team Office of the CHBG.

We will appreciate any material sent to us that reveals your points-of-view in connection with the work in progress, or your suggestions on how to make the work more efficient and useful to our consumers. In a word, you are welcome to express your meaning and it is our responsibility to bring it to the knowledge of our readers - the members of CHBG.

The **CHBG** was registered as the 20th Review Group within the Cochrane Collaboration in March 1996.

Thanks to the support provided by researchers and editors engaged in doing systematic reviews; the Copenhagen Trial Unit, Institute of Preventive Medicine, Copenhagen Hospital Corporation, Denmark; The 1991 Pharmacy Foundation, Denmark; and The Danish National Library of Science and Medicine, **we are able** to pursue our aims in preparing, maintaining and disseminating systematic reviews about

the effects of health-care in hepato-biliary diseases.

The **LIST OF TOPICS** for systematic reviews, included in the Cochrane Library, is consistent with the hepato-biliary diagnoses listed in the World Health Organisation's International Codes of Diseases and medical and surgical interventions for use in the health-care of these diseases. The LIST OF TOPICS is subjected to completion and amendments and any comments are worth considering. For taking your suggestions into consideration, you have to contact the CHBG Editorial Team Office.

CHBG Editorial Team:

Ronald L. Koretz (USA)
Alberto Morabito (Italy) (Statistical Editor)
Luigi Pagliaro (Italy)
Thierry Poynard (France)
Robert Sutton (UK)
Torben Jørgensen (Denmark)
Christian Gluud (Denmark) (Co-ordinating Editor and Criticism Editor)

The Review Group Co-ordinators *Anne Gethe Hee*, *Dimitrinka Nikolova* and the Data Manager *Nader Salasshahri* also belong to the Editorial Team.

A consumer representative is to be appointed. The work of the Editorial Team is also supported by other people located all over the world and

they act as external peer referees, full text searchers or translators.

WHAT IS ACHIEVED until now?

We managed to establish a network with almost 170 researchers interested in meta-analyses and systematic evaluations. Due to the enthusiasm of summarising the randomised clinical controlled trials in making recommendations for treatment of patients with different diseases, there are now **2 systematic reviews** and **6 protocols** included in the 1997 CHBG September Module of The Cochrane Library.

Given below are the titles and the reviewers

Systematic Reviews

- ◆ Somatostatin or ocreotide vs placebo or no treatment in acute bleeding oesophageal varices (Gøtzsche P)
- ◆ Vaccines against hepatitis B in health-care workers (Jefferson T, Demicheli V, Deeks J, MacMillan A, Sassi F, Pratt M)

Protocols

- ◆ Endoscopic therapy vs shunts in the longterm treatment of variceal haemorrhage (Khan SA, Williamson P, Sutton R)
- ◆ Sequential combination of glucocorticosteroids and alfa interferon vs alfa interferon alone in chronic hepatitis B (Krogsgaard K, Zarski JP, Mathurin P, Poynard T)

- ◆ Interferon treatment in acute hepatitis C (Poynard T, Leroy V, Cohard M, Thevenot T, Mathurin P, Opolon P, Zarski JP)
- ◆ Interferon treatment in chronic hepatitis C (Poynard T, Leroy V, Cohard M, Thevenot T, Mathurin P, Opolon P, Zarski JP)
- ◆ Laparoscopic vs small incision or open cholecystectomy, effectiveness and safety (Jørgensen T, Laugesen H)
- ◆ Ursodeoxycholic acid for primary biliary cirrhosis (Christensen E, Gluud C)

Four more protocols are undergoing editorial processing.

Current state of handsearching

Birgitte Bernard, Corinne Gandossi, Thierry Poynard and Thierry Thevenot have handsearched the journal *Medicine et Chirurgie Digestive* from its birth in 1972 to November 1996.

Kim Krogsgaard has handsearched *J Viral Hepatol* from 1994 and onwards.

Torben Jørgensen is ready with *DIG DIS* starting with 1983 until present. He is also handsearching *Surgical Laparoscopy and Endoscopy* (1991-1996) and has presented his results for the years 1995 and 1996.

The handsearch of *Hepatology*, done by Peter Hayes, Rajiv Jalan, Christian Gluud and Dimitrinka Nikolova is finished for the years 1981-1997. The last two persons are also handsearchers of *J of Hepatology* and this search is completed too

for the years 1985-1997.

A comparison of MEDLINE search with the results from the handsearches once again clearly showed that by handsearching one identifies many more trials.

The creation of the database of published reports of randomised clinical trials, controlled clinical trials, meta-analyses and other articles of interest is a responsibility of Anne Gethe Hee, who adds manually in a separate ProCite file the clinical trials already identified by the handsearchers. One of the first things we did was to search MEDLINE for relevant titles and to order these titles from the Danish National Library of Science and Medicine. Thus, a total of 11,012 references have been downloaded and now we are in the process of identifying them. These, still of interest (the figure is expected to amount to 7,500) are being registered in our ProCite database and are given the identification code RCT, CCT, SOS, M-A - and besides for our internal use only - Observational Study, Consensus, Review, Letter and Miscellaneous.

Thus far, the CHBG database stores 1.657 RCTs, 321 CCTs and 72 M-As.

APPEAL FOR ENLISTING AS A HAND SEARCHER

Experience to date confirms that even people without former research activities can be involved in handsearching the literature for pertinent trials. Since this is a resource consuming task, we need a great number of people with language skills and willing to handsearch the literature for pertinent RCTs, CCTs

and M-As. Workshops for this purpose are organised where handsearchers are trained how to do the search and what standard eligibility criteria to apply when doing the job so there are no disparities in the result accounts of the other handsearchers.

We appeal to all interested in this voluntary work (clinicians, retired physicians, students etc.) to help us out, or probably you know someone who might be interested in this. If you wonder about something, contact the CHBG Editorial Team Office.

Forthcoming TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The Nordic Cochrane Centre is conducting workshops on:

Handsearching on 12 November,
Protocol Development - 13 November,
and *Use of RevMan* on 14 November,
all held in Copenhagen.
(cochrane@image.dk)

The Dutch Cochrane Centre - workshops on:

How to Develop a Protocol - 21 September and *How to get a Review into RevMan* on 22 September in Amsterdam.
(cochrane@amc.uva.nl)

The San Antonio Cochrane Center:
How to conduct a systematic review (including RevMan) - 29 September to 1 October, San Antonio.
(cochrane@merece.uthscsa.edu)

The UK Cochrane Centre: *Developing a Protocol* - 18 September, Oxford;

17 November, Liverpool; *Getting a review into RevMan* - 19 September, Oxford; 18 November, Liverpool. (general@cochrane.co.uk)

JUST TO REMIND YOU

Since the existence of unpublished trials is great, editors of several leading international medical journals, including the **BMJ**, **The Lancet** and **Annals of Internal Medicine** are calling an **amnesty for unpublished trials** (Medical Editors Trial Amnesty (META)). On **19 of September, 1997** the journals will publish an editorial, urging investigators with unpublished trials to register these by filling in and returning a brief registration form. **Registration** can be undertaken by anyone able to provide the registration form, even if they are unable to provide the actual trial data. It would be of a great benefit if all Cochrane Collaborators could support the META's initiation by registering any unpublished trials that members of the group are aware of. Duplication of information is expected but this should not worry you since it is unavoidable.

Did you see the short interview with **Thierry Poynard** published in *Lancet*, August 30, 1997;350:674? Here are some excerpts.

Which aspect of your work gives you most pleasure? When I have participated in a randomised clinical trial of a new treatment that significantly improves survival.

What is your ambition? To convince my colleagues that a Cochrane systematic review is not organised by Brussels European technocrats and could help patients.

Which alternative profession would you have liked to pursue? A "luthier" (violin doctor) because your patients always outlive you, and because Stradivarius, the gold standard, makes any cost analysis impossible.

On **5-8 October** and **8-12 October 1997**, respectively, the **2nd International Conference on the Scientific Basis of Health Services & the 5th Annual Cochrane Colloquium** will be held in **Amsterdam**, the Netherlands.

The most important part of the Colloquium will be constituted of workshops at which practical aspects of systematically reviewing the evidence will be discussed.

The **4th CHBG Meeting** is to be held during the AASLD Annual Meeting being held (November 7-11,) in **Chicago** on Saturday, **November 8, 1997** at **7:30 pm to 9:30 pm**, room **Ontario**. The event will take place at the Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers.

The **5th CHBG Meeting** will be held in connection to the Annual EASL Meeting in **Lisbon, Portugal in 1998**.