

Appendix 8.2
Report of an exploratory meeting

EXPLORATORY MEETING TO CONSIDER FORMING A
COCHRANE SKIN DISEASES GROUP

MINUTES

Held on: Friday 17 and Saturday 18 May 1996

At: BAD House, 19 Fitzroy Square, London, W1P 6HQ

Present:	Jan Bouwes	Dermatologist, Leiden, The Netherlands
	Bavinck	UK Cochrane Centre, Oxford
	Iain Chalmers	Dermatologist, Salford
	Robert Chalmers	Dermatologist, Cambridge
	Margaret Corbett	Co-ordinating Editor, Wounds Group,
	Nicky Cullum	York
		Dermatologist, Erlangen, Germany
	Thomas Diepgen	Microbiologist, Leeds
	Anne Eady	Director, Skin Care Campaign, London
	Christina Funnell	Clinical Pharmacologist, London
	Andrew	Dermatologist, Manchester
	Herxheimer	Clinical Pharmaceuticals, Nottingham
	Christopher	National Consumer Council, London
	Griffiths	Dermatologist, Bergamo, Italy
	Alain Li Wan Po	Product Manager,
	Barbara Meredith	Merck/Lipha Pharmaceuticals, UK
	Luigi Naldi	Dermatologist, Lewisham, London
	Steve Shaw	Dermatologist, Amsterdam, The
		Netherlands
	Catherine Smith	Product Manager, Schering Plough, UK
	Phyllis Spuls	Skin Care Campaign, London
		Dermatologist, Nottingham
	Marcus Woods	
	Andrew Whiteside	
	Hywel Williams	

In attendance: Mrs Adrienne O'Donohue, British Association of Dermatologists.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Marion White, Aberdeen. Marcus Woods and Christopher Griffiths sent their apologies for the Saturday session.

FRIDAY 17 MAY
Chair - Iain Chalmers

COCHO5-96/01 Welcome and Introductions

Everyone present introduced themselves, giving a brief description of their background and why they felt a Cochrane Skin Group should be set up.

COCHO5-96/02 Introduction to The Cochrane Collaboration and Demonstration of the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*

Iain Chalmers introduced The Cochrane Collaboration as a network of individuals committed to preparing and maintaining systematic reviews of the effects of health care. He gave a brief history of The Cochrane Collaboration, which was launched formally in October 1993 and proceeded to demonstrate the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews (now produced as part of The Cochrane Library which is updated every 3 months). He demonstrated how reviews are focused on health problems under the headings of prevention, treatment or rehabilitation strategies. Iain emphasised the 6 main principles of The Cochrane Collaboration were:

Collaboration

Collaboration between people worldwide was necessary in order to undertake the massive task of searching journals in different languages for controlled trials and in order to critically appraise and summarise that information in a form that can be used by practitioners and consumers.

Building on individuals existing interests and enthusiasm

Although several of those present were associated with various bodies, Iain emphasised that The Cochrane Collaboration was about contributing to a larger vision.

Minimising duplication of effort

Reducing bias

To reduce bias in reviews by introducing a systematic method of reporting information.

Keeping up to date

Access

COCHO5-96/03 Examples of Systematic Reviews of skin diseases already available/being prepared

Systematic reviews already completed in the field of dermatology are summarised in Appendix A.

Four of those present were directly involved in producing systematic reviews, and gave a brief summary of their topic and problems encountered:

Dithranol - Luigi Naldi, Bergamo, Italy

Luigi surveyed clinical trials examining efficacy of short contact dithranol therapy in psoriasis focusing on mainly methodologic issues. Twenty four papers published between January 1982 and December 1989 in English, French and Italian were selected. Nine of the 24 papers contained more than one trial, giving a total of 37 trials to be evaluated. Methodological differences between

studies were so vast, that pooling of results was impossible. Most trials suffered from major flaws such as failure to conceal blinding and failure to randomise. Entry criteria were also unclear and dropouts were not analyzed appropriately. Luigi also highlighted some of the problems with within-patient comparisons, eg. right-left comparisons or comparing 4 different treatments on 4 different quadrants of the body. Luigi called for a review of basic methodological requirements for clinical trials in psoriasis.

Evening Primrose Oil (Epogam) in atopic eczema - Alain Li Wan Po, Nottingham, UK

This review by Alain and Hywel Williams for the Department of Health, highlighted the vast number of outcome measures that were used for evaluating efficacy of treatment for atopic eczema. Each outcome measure - such as cracking, crusting, doctor assessed itch and dryness - used different scales, making standardisation extremely difficult. Although the main results of the study were not available for discussion, the group appreciated the need for standardisation of outcome measures for atopic eczema, especially ones which are important to patients.

Systemic psoriasis treatment - Phyllis Spuls, Amsterdam, Netherlands

Phyllis outlined a detailed review by herself and her colleagues on systemic treatments for psoriasis. This included searching of electronic databases and handsearching of relevant journals. Quality scoring of papers was carried out by 2 investigators. Phyllis pointed out the problems with quality rating studies, eg. only 60% of studies mentioned side effects, whilst only 50% of studies mentioned dropouts and how they were analyzed. Phyllis called for guidelines on conducting controlled trials in dermatology.

Type II error in dermatology trials - Hywel Williams, Nottingham, UK

Hywel reported on a review of 58 clinical trials with negative conclusions published in 3 British dermatology journals 1988-1991. The aim of the study was to determine the risk of these trials of missing important treatment differences. All but one of the 44 evaluable trials had a greater than 1 in 10 risk of missing a 25% relative treatment difference (median risk 81%) and 31 of the trials (70%) were so small that they had a greater than 1 in 10 risk of missing a 50% relevant treatment difference (median risk 42%). Even worse, half of the 'negative' results were incorrectly interpreted as evidence of no difference. Small underpowered studies are a waste of resources and patients' and doctors' time. He suggested that the situation of underpowered small trials in dermatology had not changed very much since his review in 1993, and welcomed the suggestion of updating the review in 1997.

COCHO5-96/04 Progress and developing a register of relevant trials

Hywel Williams emphasised the need to develop a register of relevant trials for systematic reviews of treatments for skin disease. Although reviews on specific topics can and have been done without such a register, a continuation of this policy without assembling a master list of all controlled trials in dermatology would result in duplication of effort and incomplete reviews. It was acknowledged that the best method of compiling such a controlled trials register was to handsearch all the dermatology journals and all conference proceedings in a systematic fashion throughout the world. Preliminary information from the St Johns Dermatology Centre librarian suggested that there were over 100 dermatology journals ever published (excluding conference proceedings where many trials are to be found). The task ahead of dermatology is therefore huge,

but one which must be started. Hywel Williams has made a start of handsearching the British Journal of Dermatology.

In order to help in prioritising journals for handsearching Hywel presented the results of a Medline search for dermatology trials using the UK Cochrane Centre search strategy. The search strategy and results of this search are summarised in Appendix B. Conclusions to the Medline search were:

In terms of prioritizing journals, most genuine controlled trials are probably in main dermatology journals over last 20 years. Working backwards with the main journals seems a sensible strategy.

In terms of contributing to a Cochrane Skin Group's Trials Register, Medline is limited in its completeness, accuracy and coverage of appropriate journals.

Use of "dermatology" or "skin diseases" as MeSH or free text terms for studying the population of dermatology trials is not very helpful. Specific disease terms are better.

Preliminary electronic searching suggests that there are virtually no CCT/RCT's on the 1000+ least frequent skin diseases.

Hywel closed by emphasising the need to co-ordinate all electronic and handsearching activities centrally in close collaboration with the Baltimore Cochrane Center, which had responsibilities for downloading references from the Medline database. This was essential to avoid duplication of effort.

Action -

Individuals interested in contributing to a Cochrane Skin Group should let Hywel know whether they wish to participate in electronic or handsearching of dermatology journals, and if so, which journal/database over what period.

COCHO5-96/05 What might the scope of a Cochrane Skin Group be? Iain Chalmers highlighted the need to consider the scope of a Cochrane Skin Group in order to avoid duplication of efforts with other Cochrane Review Groups. The Wound Healing Group and the Parasitic Diseases Group were examples of groups that could overlap with a Skin Group. Hywel had already been in touch with the co-ordinating editors of these groups to inform them of the skin diseases exploratory meeting and the need to keep in touch about potential areas of overlap. Nicky Cullum, co-ordinating editor of the Cochrane Wounds Group, had come to this meeting with this in mind. The consensus of those present was that so much work was needed in dermatology that it was not necessary to be territorial about which group did what review. Iain Chalmers suggested that for specific reviews, e.g. scabies, there would be nothing stopping someone from a Cochrane Skin Group working under the aegis of the Parasitic Diseases Group. The most important consideration was that the systematic review should be done, and done to a high scientific standard. Nicky Cullum, co-ordinating editor of the Wounds Group, emphasised the need for very close collaboration with their group in view of the large potential area of overlap, eg. leg ulceration. Although the Wounds Group had made a good start at developing a clinical trials register and summarising the effects of health care on pressure ulcers, infrastructure funding remained a major problem. Nicky emphasised the need to consider pooling resources in order to make progress on this.

Action -

Hywel Williams will send a copy of the final minutes to the co-ordinating editors of all Cochrane review groups with an area of potential overlap. Nicky Cullum will be invited to all Cochrane Skin Group meetings in order to formulate common strategies on funding and specific reviews.

The question of whether reviews on skin cancer should be included in the scope of a Cochrane Skin Group was discussed. It was felt by most of those present that the amount of work required to review the three major inflammatory disorders, ie. acne, eczema and psoriasis, was already enormous and that taking skin cancer on as a major topic was unwise. Hywel informed the group that there are individuals in Australia who are already considering forming a Cochrane Skin Cancer Group. They could link with the Cancer Network co-ordinated by Chris Williams in Oxford. Jan Bavinck (Netherlands) suggested that a Cochrane Skin Group might consider acting as a contact point and provide support to those wishing to initiate reviews in skin cancer until a Cochrane Skin Cancer Group had been established.

Action -

The main emphasis of a Cochrane Skin Group should be initially on inflammatory skin diseases such as eczema, acne and psoriasis. The group could, however, act as a contact point for reviews on skin cancer until a Cochrane Skin Cancer Group forms.

SATURDAY 18 MAY

COCHO5-96/06 Is there a basis for establishing a Cochrane Skin Group? All those at the meeting gave an unequivocal 'yes' to this agenda item. The interesting nature of the work, combined with the need for systematic reviews in the field of dermatology and breadth of expertise already represented at the exploratory meeting, provided a very good basis for forming a group.

COCHO5-96/07 What can Nottingham offer? Hywel Williams summarised the service that he and his colleague Alain Li Wan Po would be able to offer if Nottingham was acceptable to others as the editorial base for a Cochrane Skin Group. These were:

Experience in searching, reviewing and conducting meta analyses.

Good international contacts.

Space for accommodating occasional reviewers who wish to escape from their normal work surroundings in order to concentrate on a particular review.

Technical (ie. information technology) support.

A courteous and non-empire building attitude towards fostering the Cochrane Skin Group.

COCHO5-96/08 What can the Cochrane Centres offer?

Iain Chalmers described how the Cochrane Centres have been set up to help Cochrane review groups to work effectively. Every country throughout the world is linked to a particular Cochrane Centre. Cochrane Centres run free workshops for reviewers wishing to perform systematic reviews. These are summarised in Appendix C.

COCHO5-96/09 What can others offer (including those not present)?

Iain asked each individual at the meeting how they wished to be involved with the group's activities. He emphasised the need to appreciate the size of the task ahead before making any commitments, and that people could contribute in many different ways, eg. by organising a handsearch, performing a specific review, as outlined in Appendix D.

Barbara Meredith felt that she could help as a non-medically trained member to suggest important questions for review and to help edit reviews in a manner that is easily understandable by the public.

Catherine Smith had access to an excellent medical library at St John's Dermatology Centre, St Thomas's Hospital, and was interested in reviewing clinical trials in psoriasis and atopic eczema.

Margaret Corbett offered help with computing, communication, statistical and refereeing skill.

Robert Chalmers wished to concentrate on everyday problems for psoriasis sufferers, by doing systematic reviews of psoriasis management with a particular focus on topical therapy. Robert also has excellent library facilities, and works closely with Chris Griffiths. Together, they hope to obtain a research fellow to help them prepare and maintain systematic reviews.

Alain Li Wan Po (clinical pharmaceuticals) is most interested in methodological problems for inflammatory skin diseases. He has statistical skills and access to PhD students who might be engaged on specific systematic reviews.

Tina Funnell, of the Skin Care Campaign, offered publicity for the group at meetings. Tina also suggested that the Skin Care Campaign could be used as a fund-raising vehicle for supporting the Group's activities. She wholly embraced the idea of involving patients in deciding review topics and editing reviews, right from the beginning of the process.

Anne Eady (Microbiologist) was happy to support the skin diseases group in every way she can in terms of handsearching activities, developing protocols, preparing and maintaining reviews and commenting on other reviews.

Steven Shaw of Merek/Lipha Pharmaceuticals is willing to publicise the group's activities at international meetings, especially to other pharmaceutical companies. He pointed out that Merek/Lipha were already supporting a PhD student at Nottingham who would look at methodological problems in assessing outcome measures for psoriasis.

Andrew Herxheimer would like to prepare a review of cholinergic urticaria and use his experience as an editor to comment on protocols and reviews.

Phyllis Spuls would like to perform reviews with some of her Dutch colleagues, especially on systemic treatments of psoriasis. She will first need to discuss this with her Head of Department before committing herself further.

Nicky Cullum (co-ordinating editor of the Wounds Group) offered to help collaborate on reviews that are common to the Wounds and Skin Groups, and also to help encourage dermatology nurses join the Cochrane Skin Group.

Andrew Whiteside (Skin Care Campaign) offered to help search journals, and with specific reviews and protocol development.

Jan Bouwes Bavinck offered his help in searching journals and in doing reviews in non-melanoma skin cancer. He has access to students who might be able to help in this activity. He would be interested in helping to establish a Cochrane Skin Cancer Group if he can obtain some support.

Thomas Diepgen offered his help in handsearching activities for journals, abstracts and conference proceedings and in preparing specific systematic reviews. He is on the editorial board of the Germany Language Bureau and has interest in methodological aspects, such as outcome measures, scoring systems, etc. He also co-ordinates the worldwide website for dermatology (Internet site address <http://www.rrze.unierlangen.de/docs/FAU/fakultaet/med/kli/derma/>), and would be able to assist in publicity for the Group through the Internet.

Luigi Naldi is already an enthusiastic supporter of The Cochrane Collaboration and has worked closely with the Italian Cochrane Centre in producing systematic reviews. He has a part-time secretary, and colleagues in his department could comment on protocols. Luigi also has good links with up to 40 dermatologists throughout the Gruppo Italiano Studi Epidemiologici in Dermatologia (GISSED) network in Italy to help with handsearching papers and producing reviews. Luigi

has a personal interest in epidemiology and methodological aspects in inflammatory skin diseases.

Action -

Hywel Williams encouraged those present to think about the work of the group before committing themselves any further. He therefore invited them to reflect how they would like to contribute to a Cochrane Skin Group, and to follow this up by writing to him outlining the area and activities that would interest them, by 7 June 1996.

COCHO5-96/10 Written Contributions

i) Those who have expressed a willingness to start helping

Written contributions from people who were committed to preparing and maintaining systematic reviews, but who could not be present at the exploratory meeting, were read out by Hywel Williams:

Name	Country	Area of Interest	Activity of Interest
Meena Agrawal	(UK)	Formulation of pharmaceutical products and interface audit	Peer reviewing protocols, help with co-ordinating activities
Chris Commens	(Australia)	Non-neoplastic skin diseases	Not specified
Dédée Murrell	(Australia)	Non-neoplastic skin diseases, especially autoimmune bullous diseases and autoimmune connective tissue diseases	Journal searching, or being part of an editorial group or a reviewer
Lars Petersen	(Denmark)	Atopic skin diseases such as atopic dermatitis and urticaria	Any aspect of Cochrane work
John Newton	(UK)	Acne	Contribute to acne reviews
Terence Ryan	(UK)	Scabies, wounds	Facilitating overseas doctors to participate in systematic reviews
Gordon Searles	(Canada)	Cutaneous manifestations of internal disease, mucosal dermatology, autoimmune bullous diseases, toxic epidermal necrolysis	Searcher and preliminary reviewer
Marion White	(UK)	Atopic dermatitis	Reviewing

ii) Those who wish only to be kept informed of the Group's development:

Dr. John Berth-Jones (Coventry, UK)
 Prof. John Burton (Bristol, UK)
 Prof. William Cunliffe (Leeds, UK)
 Dr. David Gawkrödger (Sheffield, UK)
 Prof. Roderick Hay (London, UK)

Prof. Rona Mackie	(Glasgow, UK)
Dr. Richard Rycroft	(London, UK)
Dr. Thomas Salopek	(Canada)
Dr. Keith Steele	(UK)
Dr. Jimmy Volmink	(S. Africa/UK)

COCHO5-96/11 Action Plan and Timetable

Structure of the editorial group

Iain Chalmers invited all those present to serve in an editorial capacity for the Cochrane Skin Diseases Group. All were happy to support Hywel Williams as co-ordinating editor. At that point of the meeting, Iain Chalmers handed over the chairmanship to Hywel. Hywel specifically requested that Professor Alain Li Wan Po join him on the editorial staff in view of Alain's knowledge of methodological aspects of meta-analysis and statistics. The group were happy to support this. Luigi Naldi (Italy) and Thomas Diepgen (Germany) also offered to act in an editorial capacity with the Skin Diseases Group and this was accepted by all. Hywel Williams also proposed Dédée Murrell as part of the editorial team in view of her stated desire to work as an editor and in view of the evidence of her commitment by her attendance at Cochrane workshops, etc. in Australia. This was accepted by all. The editorial group will consist of:

Thomas Diepgen (Germany)
 Alain Li Wan Po (UK)
 Dédée Murrell (Australia)
 Luigi Naldi (Italy)
 Hywel Williams (co-ordinating editor, UK)

COCHO5-96/12 Topics for review and possible reviewers

Topic	Possible Reviewers
Corticosteroids in toxic epidermal necrolysis	Luigi Naldi, Jan Bavinck, ?Jean-Claude Roujeau, Moya Mockenhaupt
Long term efficacy of topical corticosteroids and emollients in atopic eczema	Hywel Williams, Cathy Smith, Anne Eady, Andrew Whiteside
Diet and atopic eczema	Cathy Smith, Anne Bady, ?Professor Tim David, Manchester
Antihistamines in atopic eczema	?John Berth-Jones, Hywel Williams
Chinese herbs in atopic eczema	?Andrew Whiteside, Hywel Williams, Alain Li Wan Po
Non-medical interventions in dermatology, eg. family support and education and help for those with learning disabilities	Barbara Meredith
Psychological treatments for psoriasis	Chris Griffiths, ?Chris Main

Treatments for guttate psoriasis	Robert Chalmers
Treatments for palmar plantar, pustular psoriasis and generalised pustular psoriasis	Robert Chalmers, Chris Griffiths, Phyllis Spuls
Systemic Treatments for chronic plaque psoriasis	Phyllis Spuls, Robert Chalmers, Chris Griffiths
Mupirocin for cutaneous infections	Anne Eady
Skin problems in elderly individuals such as treatment of senile pruritus	Barbara Meredith
Treatment of axillary hyperhidrosis	Andrew Herxheimer
Treatment of cholinergic and delayed pressure urticaria	Andrew Herxheimer
Non-steroid treatments for hand eczema	Tina Funnell
Treatment of acne scars	Anne Eady

Hywel noted that some common areas were already beginning to emerge, eg.

Atopic eczema – Hywel Williams, Alain Li Wan Po, Marion White, Tina Funnell, Andrew Whiteside, Thomas Diepgen, Cathy Smith.

Psoriasis - Luigi Naldi, Chris Griffiths, Robert Chalmers, Cathy Smith, Phyllis Spuls.

Acne – Hywel Williams, Anne Eady, John Newton.

Bullous Disorders - Dédée Murrell and Gordon Searles.

It was also pointed out that many of those present had a common interest in methodological issues such as choice of outcome measures to be used in inflammatory skin diseases and that there was considerable skill mix amongst those present to tackle standardisation of these issues in systematic reviews.

COCHO5-96/13 Co-ordination of searching journals and conference proceedings

In addition to the current listing of 102 dermatology journals, Hywel invited all those present to update him with any further journals or conference proceedings where potential trials may be distributed.

Action -

Please send information on conference proceedings/journals to Hywel so that a full list of all journals where potential trials may be located can be compiled.

COCHO5-96/14 Support for Funding an Administrator

Hywel stressed how important it was to have an administrator/contact base for the work envisaged by the Group. This would be a full time position and would need a person with considerable personal and organisational skills, as suggested by the Cochrane Handbook. Such a person would need ongoing funding and the group would need to find their own funds for this activity. Tina

Funnell suggested that the Skin Care Campaign organise a fund raising event with presentations to the pharmaceutical companies and other possible funders. Barbara Meredith felt that funding should not be solely pharmaceutical in origin, and others agreed that every attempt should be made to ensure additional sources of funding, such as Government departments, research councils, and other charities, etc., for specific reviews.

Action -

Tina Funnell (Skin Care Campaign) to organise a Cochrane fund raising meeting in London on Monday 23 September 1996. This should include a presentation on the work planned for a Cochrane Skin Group and should include as many members of the editorial team as possible. Once funds are secured, these would be allocated to a separate fund, c/o the Skin Care Campaign. It was agreed by those present that Nicky Cullum of the Wounds Group should also be present at the fund raising meeting so that those from the industry who were interested in wound care products could be approached with a view to supporting the Wounds Group.

COCHO5-96/15 Preparation and Application to Register The Cochrane Collaboration

Iain Chalmers circulated an up-to-date checklist for Cochrane review registrations (Appendix B). The following targets were agreed by the group:

Application for registration should be submitted end of July/beginning of August 1996.

Date for administrator in post: This would depend on funding from Skin Care Campaign. July 1997 was mentioned as a realistic target.

Submission date for first protocols: Three protocols to be submitted to the editorial group by the end of 1996.

Date for first reviews entered into the Cochrane database: evening primrose oil (Epogam) and atopic eczema by the end of 1996.

Number of reviews in first 5 years: 10 was thought to be realistic.

Dates for completing retrospective handsearches to be negotiated with local Cochrane centre in view of the enormity of the task.

Dates for completing retrospective electronic searches: end of 1997.

Iain Chalmers indicated that it would take approximately 6 months before the group was registered if everything proceeded well.

Hywel Williams thanked everyone for attending the meeting and said that he felt that a lot had been achieved. Hywel also emphasised how well the group had worked together over the last couple of days and that the group felt very balanced in terms of skill mix and international and consumer/ patient representation. Iain Chalmers echoed these sentiments and felt that the proposed Cochrane Skin Group would be productive and successful.

COCHO5-96/16 Date of the Next Meeting

To be held at BAD House, 19 Fitzroy Square, London W1 P 5HQ on 16/17 May 1997.