

Progress report

I joined the fellowship on the ninth of March 2015 at the South Asian Cochrane centre in CMC Vellore. At the start, I was introduced to the principles of scoping, to identify suitable questions for a systematic review.

There, I attended a 2 day workshop on identifying priority areas for primary or secondary research in typhoid. This enabled me to understand the importance and principles of identifying the right and relevant questions for a review, keeping in context the Indian scenario. After this, I was introduced to the principles of writing a protocol in the style of Cochrane. I was also exposed at this stage to the various requirements for reporting a systematic review (PRISMA statement). I was then taught the principles of searching and the search strategies by the search strategist Mr. Paul. My mentor Dr. Prathap Tharyan laid stress on defining the PICO question (People, intervention, comparison and outcome). He also laid emphasis on the thoroughness of the search strategy particularly in grey literature and conference proceedings. I was later exposed to the Cochrane risk of bias assessments. (Selection bias, performance bias, detection bias and attrition bias). Particular emphasis was paid on the response (high, low and unclear)

I was also exposed to the software GRADE for recommending strengths of evidence for each primary outcome. Particular emphasis was laid on downgrading and upgrading the quality of evidence. I learnt how to make a summary of findings table using GRADE. Emphasis was laid on summing up the findings for those outcomes where the evidence was high.

I was taught Meta -analysis by the centre statistician, Mr. Richard Kirubakaran. I was exposed to the following softwares- Revman, CMA and Stata 12. In addition, I received introductory training into network Meta analysis which helps in indirect comparisons of interventions. In


addition I was given an introduction to trial sequential analysis and sample size calculation for prospective Meta analysis.

During this period I was advised to read and discuss Cochrane protocols and systematic reviews. Although most of my work during the period dealt with randomized trials, I had a brief introduction to systematic reviews of observational studies. I also learnt to use the New castle Ottawa scale to grade the risk of bias for non randomized trials. My mentor also emphasized on the standards of reporting of trials and guided me on the various aspects of reporting of randomized trials.

I worked on 2 protocols under the guidance of my mentor Dr. Prathap Tharyan. Based on my scoping search I identified 2 topics -vaccine immunotherapy for multibacillary leprosy (*Vaccine immunotherapy with multidrug treatment for people with multi-bacillary leprosy*) and male circumcision for preventing STI. This was published online in Prospero (CRD42015020929). The title registration form for the Cochrane STI group-male circumcision for preventing STI has been sent to the editorial office.

I completed the fellowship on June 6, 2015 and returned to my parent institute.

My future work would involve completing the above titles and submitting them successfully. I hope to have a Cochrane review published in 2years time. I also plan to submit an overview of reviews in psoriasis with particular emphasis on the issues in India as part of my fellowship.


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