

## The Cochrane Collaboration: Key Messages

*Intended for communication using a variety of media, to a variety of audiences*

January 2013

### *What are key messages?*

**Key messages** are the core message you want your target audiences to hear and remember. They create meaning and headline the issue.

- Key messages allow you to control communications and enhance relationships with your target audiences.
- Key messages are designed to work out what you really need to get across on the topic to the audiences. What are the critical messages that you want to communicate?
- They are what you must say and get across in the communication situation — irrespective of what questions the audience asks.
- With your audience in mind and focused on your objectives, you should work out in advance of the communications situation what you must say on the topic concerned.
- It is best not to have any more than seven messages on any one topic.
- Key messages are commonly known as elevator statements or BBQ statements — what we want our target audiences to say when they are discussing the topic around a BBQ with their friends.

### **Some recognised criteria for key messages include:**

- Be believable — support with evidence
- Be understood — reflect stakeholders' understanding
- Be distinctive — clear competitive awareness
- Be agreed — company strategy
- Be credible — know your stuff
- Drive your agenda
- Avoid negativity
- Enhance positively
- Use the brand

[publicrelationsydney.com.au](http://publicrelationsydney.com.au)

## ***Key messages identified for The Cochrane Collaboration***

Each of these 10 messages is discussed in more detail below.

### **Purpose/use of message: Awareness – *Who we are and what we do***

1) The Cochrane Collaboration is a not-for-profit, global network of approximately 28,000 dedicated people in 120 countries. We are all bound by a shared passion for helping patients, policy-makers and practitioners make informed healthcare decisions based on all the best research evidence available.

2) The Cochrane Collaboration is widely recognised as the highest standard in assessing and reporting research to determine the effectiveness of different healthcare treatments and interventions.

3) Our work touches on multiple aspects of health and health care.

### **Purpose/use of message: Motivation – *What makes us unique and important***

4) The Cochrane Collaboration is continually raising the standards for systematic reviews of evidence. Thanks to these efforts, Cochrane is a recognised leader in furthering the science of systematic reviews.

5) Together, we are generating impact around the world.

6) We are a trusted partner to healthcare practitioners, researchers and policy-makers.

7) We believe everyone has the same right to the best evidence, so we operate without profit, conflicts of interest or boundaries to advance healthcare decision-making, for the good of everyone.

8) We empower patients and healthcare consumers by providing the evidence they need to make informed decisions about their own health care and ensuring patient viewpoints are included in the Cochrane Review production process.

### **Purpose/use of message: Call to Action – *How our stakeholders can contribute to the success of our mission***

9) Join us and help enhance health care for all.

### **Purpose/use of message: Foster Relationships – *How the contribution of stakeholders are welcomed and recognised***

10) Contributing to the work of the Collaboration has its own rewards

## **Key Message 1**

**The Cochrane Collaboration is a not-for-profit, global network of approximately 28,000 dedicated people in 120 countries. We are all bound by a shared passion for helping patients, policy-makers and practitioners make informed healthcare decisions based on all the best research evidence available.**

### **Purpose/use of message: Awareness – *Who we are and what we do***

#### **Supporting text:**

The Cochrane Collaboration builds a global community that works to improve the lives of citizens and patients, and the delivery of health care around the world - we create global linkages. The Collaboration has a small central team of 500 full- and part-time staff, surrounded by a global network of more than 28,000 dedicated contributors. Many of our contributors are world leaders in their field of medicine, health policy, research methodology and consumer advocacy. These experts work together from all over the world and are situated in some of the world's finest academic and medical institutions.

Our goals and guiding principles:

We aim to ensure high-quality Cochrane Reviews are available across a broad range of healthcare topics

- We believe in ensuring quality by being open and responsive to criticism, applying advances in methodology, and developing systems for quality improvement.
- We believe in minimising bias through a variety of approaches such as scientific rigour, ensuring broad participation, and avoiding conflicts of interest.
- We believe in keeping up-to-date by a commitment to ensure that Cochrane Reviews are maintained through identification and incorporation of new evidence.

We aim to promote access to Cochrane Reviews and the other products of The Cochrane Collaboration

- We believe in promoting access by wide dissemination of the outputs of the Collaboration, taking advantage of strategic alliances, and by promoting appropriate prices, content and media to meet the needs of users worldwide.
- We believe in striving for relevance by promoting the assessment of healthcare interventions using outcomes that matter to people making choices in health care.

We aim to ensure an efficient, transparent organisational structure and management system for The Cochrane Collaboration

- We believe in collaboration, by internally and externally fostering good communications, open decision-making and teamwork.
- We believe in avoiding duplication by good management and co-ordination to maximise economy of effort.

We aim to achieve sustainability of The Cochrane Collaboration

- We believe in building on the enthusiasm of individuals by involving and supporting people of different skills and backgrounds.
- We believe in enabling wide participation in the work of the Collaboration by reducing barriers to contributing and by encouraging diversity.

## **Key Message 2**

**The Cochrane Collaboration is widely recognised as the gold standard in assessing and reporting research to determine the effectiveness of different healthcare treatments and interventions.**

### **Purpose/use of message: Awareness – *Who we are and what we do***

#### **Supporting text:**

The best scientific evidence on whether different drugs and procedures are safe and effective is scattered across different sources and journals, often in different languages. Practitioners and patients need a fast way to access the best evidence and use it to influence their decisions. They also need to know that the source of this evidence is trustworthy and kept up-to-date. The Cochrane Collaboration is a trusted, not-for-profit organisation that gathers the best available scientific evidence, analyses what the collective evidence says about a particular drug or procedure, and shares the findings with practitioners, governments and the public. The result: healthcare decisions are based on solid evidence. We use a powerful process to create Cochrane Reviews to assess the effectiveness and safety of many different kinds of health treatments and interventions, ranging from whether vitamin C helps cure the common cold to the effectiveness of magnesium sulphate for women at risk of preterm birth to prevent cerebral palsy. Cochrane Reviews are widely considered the gold standard in systematic reviews of health evidence.

Many people are surprised to learn that only 30-40 per cent of health care delivered is based on the most recent evidence and 20-25 per cent is harmful or of no benefit.

- Schuster, McGlynn, Brook (1998). *Milbank Memorial Quarterly* 69(4). Med Care

Cochrane Reviews are the main product of *The Cochrane Library* and are internationally recognised as the highest standard in evidence-based health care. A Cochrane Review addresses a clearly formulated question regarding a healthcare intervention and investigates whether or not there is conclusive evidence about a specific treatment. Example: Can antibiotics help alleviate symptoms of a sore throat? All existing primary research on the topic is thoroughly searched, collated and assessed using strict guidelines. Cochrane Reviews are also updated periodically, to incorporate and evaluate any relevant new evidence, and ensure that they remain current and comprehensive.

Cochrane Reviews are designed to facilitate the choices that practitioners, consumers, policy-makers and others face in health care. Without Cochrane Reviews, people making decisions are unlikely to be able to access and make full use of existing healthcare research.

### ***Key Message 3***

**Our work touches on multiple aspects of health and health care.**

**Purpose/use of message: Awareness – *Who we are and what we do***

#### **Supporting text:**

Our work is as broad as the topic of human health itself. We produce Cochrane Reviews across the widest possible range of healthcare topics. Our collection of Cochrane Reviews now includes more 5400 individual reviews on a wide range of health care topics, with more than 2300 underway.

Our focus is as specialised as modern medicine and healthcare delivery. The Cochrane Collaboration includes 53 different [Review Groups](#), each focused on specific aspects of health, including the [Gynaecological Cancer Review Group](#), the [Oral Health Review Group](#), and the [Multiple Sclerosis and Rare Diseases of the Central Nervous System Review Group](#). Beyond groups focused on traditional medical topics, the Collaboration also includes groups such as the [Effective Practice and Organisation of Care Review Group](#), which reviews interventions designed to improve the delivery, practice, and organisation of healthcare services. Another example is the [Consumers and Communication Review Group](#), which prepares and publishes systematic reviews of interventions which affect the way people interact with healthcare professionals, services and researchers.

## ***Key Message 4***

**The Cochrane Collaboration is continually raising the standards for systematic reviews of evidence. Thanks to these efforts, Cochrane is a recognised leader in furthering the science of systematic reviews.**

### ***Purpose/use of message: Motivation – What makes us unique and important***

#### **Supporting text:**

Research is continually evolving and better methods are always emerging – and The Cochrane Collaboration is leading the way. We continually raise the standards for Cochrane Reviews of evidence and ensure our reviews always use the most rigorous methodology. Before The Cochrane Collaboration embarked on its work, systematic reviews were virtually unknown in health care. From the beginning, The Cochrane Collaboration has involved innovative methodologists who developed many of the standards and techniques that have set the standards for systematic reviews today.

Cochrane Methods Groups play an important role through developing methodology and advising The Cochrane Collaboration on how the validity and credibility of Cochrane Reviews can be improved. Methods Groups provide policy advice, training, and support and monitor the quality of Cochrane Reviews. The Collaboration also produces the [\*Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions\*](#), which describes the process of preparing and maintaining Cochrane Reviews in detail to guide contributors. The clear guidance we provide in the *Cochrane Handbook* is also widely used by those preparing non-Cochrane systematic reviews. The value of the Cochrane Review approach has been gradually recognised, as many medical journals now look to systematic reviews as important evidence and often report on the findings of Cochrane Reviews.

The Cochrane Collaboration not only provides global evidence, but we specify the quality of the evidence and report on the benefits and harms of treatments, providing patients, policy-makers and practitioners the up-to-date, comprehensive information they require to make informed decisions. Our mission is to produce information that is consistently realistic and credible.

## **Key Message 5**

**Together, we are generating impact around the world.**

### **Purpose/use of message: Motivation – *What makes us unique and important***

#### **Supporting text:**

Individuals involved in The Cochrane Collaboration wear many hats – many contributors are also involved in other influential healthcare organisations which allow them to spread information about the Collaboration through word of mouth. This influential method of sharing our messages allows others in the healthcare field to learn about the significance of Cochrane Reviews and highlight the importance of evidence-based medicine.

The Cochrane Collaboration is committed to identifying research gaps, so funding can be focussed on pushing quality primary research.

Abstracts and Plain Language Summaries of all Cochrane Reviews are available for free worldwide. These tools provide bottom line summaries of the evidence found in Cochrane Reviews. Plain Language Summaries and abstracts are available through [summaries.cochrane.org](http://summaries.cochrane.org) in English, French, German and Spanish. Plain Language Summaries and abstracts are also published with each review in [The Cochrane Library](#). The Collaboration is currently in the process of translating all Plain Language Summaries and abstracts into French, and we provide a considerable number of abstracts and Plain Language Summaries in other languages, including Spanish, Japanese and Chinese.

Alternatively, those looking for comprehensive findings can download the complete Cochrane Review. Fifty per cent of the world's population has free one-click access to full-text reviews (many low-income countries are granted free access to *The Cochrane Library*; please visit [The Cochrane Library](#) for more information about this initiative). The other 50 per cent has access through subscriptions or one-off review purchases (subscriptions are typically purchased through provincial or federal governments, health/medical organisations, universities, etc.). Information about subscriptions to *The Cochrane Library* can be found [here](#).

Under the new contract, the Collaboration signed with its publisher, John Wiley & Sons, Inc, all Cochrane Systematic Reviews published from February 2013 will be available open access 12 months after publication in *The Cochrane Library*.

The Cochrane Collaboration's reputation for excellence has allowed us to forge close working ties with several of the world's leading independent healthcare organisations, including the World Health Organization. We have been awarded a seat on the World Health Assembly, allowing the Collaboration to provide input on WHO health resolutions as a [Non-Governmental Organization in Official Relations with the WHO](#). We are regularly asked to contribute to guideline developments, including the WHO's [e-Library of Evidence for Nutrition Actions](#) (eLENA) and its [Reproductive Health Library](#). WHO also consults our reviews when formulating their Model List of Essential Medicines ([adult](#) and [children](#)). More information is available on [cochrane.org](http://cochrane.org).

## Key Message 6

**We are a trusted partner and resource for healthcare practitioners, researchers and policy-makers.**

### **Purpose/use of message: Motivation – *What makes us unique and important***

#### **Supporting text:**

Your health may have already been improved by a Cochrane Review without your knowledge. Cochrane Review conclusions are now interwoven with healthcare practices via multiple routes, and our reviews touch on multiple aspects of health including public health, mental health, and complementary medicine, among much more.

With Cochrane Reviews accessible online, health practitioners around the world have faster access to accurate, invaluable information, allowing them to improve patient care. Not only do health practitioners access this information, but Cochrane Reviews are often accessed by health consumers as well. In fact, our top accessed reviews are typically most sought out by consumers. Our recent [most accessed reviews](#) (please scroll to the bottom of the page) are as follows:

- [Interventions for preventing obesity in children.](#)
- [Statins for the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease.](#)
- [Interventions for preventing falls in older people living in the community.](#)
- [Interventions for treating obesity in children.](#)
- [Zinc for the common cold.](#)

Cochrane Reviews are regularly used to set national and international healthcare policies. For example, evidence from Cochrane Reviews (on tuberculosis, child mistreatment, diabetes and HIV) formed the basis of recommendations made to the Canadian Collaboration for Immigrant and Refugee Health. These were published as clinical practice guidelines in the CMAJ ([Canadian Medical Association Journal](#)).

Reviews produced by the [Breast Cancer Review Group](#) have provided the evidence base for a number of guidelines on best clinical practice, including the Central European Cooperative Oncology Group's [Third consensus on medical treatment of metastatic breast cancer](#) (published in 2009; included four Cochrane Reviews), the [Screening for Breast Cancer: An Update for the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#) (published in 2009; included one Cochrane Review), the New Zealand [Management of Early Breast Cancer](#) Guidelines by the Ministry of Health (published in 2010; included seven Cochrane Reviews), and many more.

Not only do Cochrane Reviews influence guidelines, but information from our reviews are also found in consumer-orientated publications and websites such as *Good Housekeeping*, which featured an [article](#) referencing a [Cochrane Review](#) about back pain treatment. This is only one instance of the many examples where Cochrane evidence is featured outside of academic and health-related publications. Many more examples can be found on [cochrane.org/in-the-news](#).

## Key Message 7

**We believe everyone has the same right to the best evidence, so we operate without profit, conflicts of interest or boundaries to advance healthcare decision-making, for the good of everyone.**

### **Purpose/use of message: Motivation – *What makes us unique and important***

#### **Supporting text:**

We are dedicated, first and foremost, to advancing health care. We foster a culture of sharing, not competition. We encourage open and transparent communication and collaboration between all our contributors around the world.

One of the main principles of The Cochrane Collaboration is minimising bias. We have a strict policy that prevents commercial sponsorship, in any form, from supporting the creation of any Cochrane Review. We are not influenced by commercial or financial interests. Our independent status helps us maintain the quality of our output at all times.

The Cochrane Collaboration is led by a Board of Trustees, known as the Steering Group, which is made up of elected members from around the world, drawn from the leadership of Cochrane groups.

Expert scientists, researchers, health policy-makers, consumer advocates and patients give their time freely, and align themselves with our ethos, to produce Cochrane Reviews.

Our volunteer-driven model means those individuals who contribute to the Collaboration do so for the public good. This is far more sustainable than a remunerative model. In fact, the number of people working within Cochrane in 120 countries has increased by about 25 per cent every year for the last five years. People want to be a part of this effort.

## ***Key Message 8***

**We empower patients by providing the evidence they need to make informed decisions about their own health care and involving them in the Cochrane Review process.**

### **Purpose/use of message: Motivation – *What makes us unique and important***

#### **Supporting text:**

We publish our Plain Language Summaries and abstracts online, making them easy to search and available free of charge to the public in [The Cochrane Library](#) and through [Cochrane Summaries](#).

The Cochrane Collaboration strives for relevance and enables wide participation through the following means:

- Our attempts to include consumers in all stages of the review process.
- Our focus on patient reported outcomes and outcomes that matter to consumers.
- The efforts by some Cochrane groups, such as the [Incontinence Review Group](#), to use consumer values and preferences to decide which reviews to undertake.
- The Cochrane Consumer Network, which exists to support consumers to provide their perspectives and contribute effectively to the Collaboration, help set priorities, and explain the role of the Collaboration and evidence in health care to consumers/patients/citizens and their representatives globally.

## ***Key Message 9***

**Join us and help enhance health care for all.**

***Purpose/use of message: Call to Action – How our stakeholders can contribute to the success of our mission***

### **Supporting text:**

Putting the right medical information in the right hands can help save lives, reduce suffering and further health science.

We encourage people with different skills and backgrounds to [contribute to The Cochrane Collaboration in a variety of ways](#). These might include: preparing new or updated systematic reviews; training people to conduct and use Cochrane Reviews; developing methodology; and acting as peer reviewers.

We continually strive to reduce barriers to contributing and are committed to encouraging diversity. We welcome contributors from around the world, and often help fund those from low-income countries to attend training and events. We also rotate our annual Cochrane Colloquium around the globe to encourage and enable locals from different countries to attend.

The quality of Cochrane Reviews stems from the commitment of our contributors and the high-level support we provide them. The Collaboration and Cochrane Centres around the world provide customised training programs and guidance. We also publish and maintain the [Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions](#) to describe in detail the process of preparing and maintaining Cochrane Reviews on the effects of healthcare interventions.

Health care is, ultimately, about patients and their families. That's why we encourage patients throughout the world to share their perspectives and influence the direction and output of healthcare research through their involvement in the [Cochrane Consumer Network](#).

## ***Key Message 10***

**Contributing to the work of the Collaboration has its own rewards.**

***Purpose/use of message: Foster Relationships – How the contribution of stakeholders are welcomed and recognised***

### **Supporting text:**

The Cochrane Collaboration has a broad collegial framework, not framed by traditional structures. As a part of the Collaboration, you have access to a large and varied medical, academic, and scientific network. There is a generation of social and intellectual capital in The Cochrane Collaboration. Being involved in a remarkable, generous organisation like The Cochrane Collaboration allows one to contribute to the global good. The spirit and ethos of the Collaboration allows one to contribute to improving health and the decision to use evidence while building relationships with colleagues around the world.

## *General informational text about The Cochrane Collaboration*

**Option 1:** General text created by Delta Media, the Public Relations firm which was hired to help with the Marketing and Communications Plan. This boilerplate is designed for an audience unfamiliar with The Cochrane Collaboration and can be used in materials such as media releases.

### **The Cochrane Collaboration**

#### **Trusted evidence. Informed decisions. Better health.**

Founded in 1993, The Cochrane Collaboration is the largest global network of scientists, researchers, health policy-makers and consumer advocates involved in the production of systematic reviews of healthcare evidence to answer questions about health care. Some 28,000 individuals in 120 countries willingly contribute their time and expertise to a rigorous process of gathering, assessing, and synthesising research on the effectiveness of health care interventions to produce Cochrane Reviews. The results are then shared with practitioners, policy-makers and patients to help them make informed and effective choices. Cochrane Reviews are widely considered the gold standard in systematic reviews of health evidence. They are published in *The Cochrane Library*, in English, with a growing selection available in other languages. As a non-governmental and not-for-profit organisation, The Cochrane Collaboration operates to minimise bias and remain free from commercial influences, and offers training and guidance to its growing network of contributors. Additional information and access to *The Cochrane Library* are available at [cochrane.org](http://cochrane.org).

**Option 2:** Boilerplate currently found on [www.cochrane.org](http://www.cochrane.org).

### **The Cochrane Collaboration**

The Cochrane Collaboration is an international network of more than 28,000 dedicated people from 120 countries. We work together to help healthcare providers, policy-makers, patients, their advocates and carers, make well-informed decisions about health care, by preparing, updating, and promoting the accessibility of Cochrane Reviews – over 5,300 so far, published online in the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, part of *The Cochrane Library*. We also prepare the largest collection of records of randomised controlled trials in the world called CENTRAL, published as part of *The Cochrane Library*. Our work is internationally recognised as the benchmark for high-quality information about the effectiveness of health care.

### **Our contributors**

There are more than 28,000 people working within The Cochrane Collaboration in 120 countries, over 70 per cent of whom are authors of Cochrane Reviews. Of that figure, only 500 people are funded to work full- or part-time with groups in support of review author teams and of the organisation as a whole; the remainder contribute their time voluntarily or are funded through their employment with other organisations, such as universities or healthcare organisations.

The number of Cochrane contributors has increased by about 25 per cent every year for the last five years. Many of our contributors are world leaders in their field of medicine, health policy, research methodology, or consumer advocacy, and our groups are situated in some of the world's finest academic and medical institutions.