

Knowledge Translation case-study: Cochrane Airways partnering with Asthma UK

This case study tells the story of the partnership between [Cochrane Airways](#) and [Asthma UK](#), a UK-based charity, between 2014 -2017. The partnership included priority setting and dissemination of Cochrane evidence and brought new authors into Cochrane.

The beginning - a clear need: engaging Asthma UK in a priority setting process

We already had a working relationship with Samantha Walker, the Director of Policy at Asthma UK. Samantha had written a review on [Omalizumab for asthma in adults and children](#). We wanted to develop the partnership, but we needed something concrete to bring us together. We received a programme grant from [NIHR](#) to work on a suite of asthma reviews in 2014. In previous grants we had simply chosen the reviews that we wanted to work on or that people, such as local commissioners, had suggested through informal networking. In this grant, we wanted to do something more transparent and involving patients.

We needed help with this and the obvious partner was Asthma UK. Samantha put us in touch with Leanne Metcalf and Courtney Coleman and we started to work out what to do. We wanted to run an asthma workshop to identify and prioritize questions that were important to patients and carers. Asthma UK was happy to comment on our plans and to advertise the workshop to their Research and Policy Volunteers as well as post on their Facebook page. Courtney suggested that we also conduct a survey for people that couldn't, or didn't want to, travel to London. They supported us drafting the text for the asthma workshop and the survey in language appropriate for their audience.

Courtney came to the workshop herself - it was great having her involved. Leanne Metcalf by that time had left Asthma UK but we employed her freelance to run one of the focus groups.

Details of the prioritization process can be found [here](#).

Working towards success

Mutual benefits

- We received great input into our priority setting process. The patient and carer perspective led to changes in the Reviews we completed compared to what we initially planned.
- The workshop was an opportunity for Asthma UK's Research and Policy volunteers to get involved.
- Throughout the process we got to know the people in Asthma UK and subsequently the [Asthma UK Centre for Applied Research \(CAR\)](#) – a research institute funded by Asthma UK – really well and share ideas and projects informally as well as attend meetings.
- We produced [Making Sense of Allergies](#) jointly with Asthma UK, Cochrane UK, Sense about Science and a number of other organizations. Providing evidence based and balanced information to people living with, and particularly parents of children who were diagnosed with or have a suspected allergy, was really important to Samantha Walker and Sense About Science. Allergies is not a major part of Cochrane Airway's

scope, but it is relevant and we were thrilled to be able to bring together authors and people from our department at St George's University of London to work on a project together.

- We are working on Cochrane Reviews with people based at Asthma UK CAR, which allows them to advance their academic careers, whilst giving us high-quality Cochrane Reviews.
- We have provided training in Cochrane Review methodology to people based at the Asthma UK CAR.
- We reviewed a grant application for Asthma UK.
- We supported the funding and re-funding bid for the Asthma UK CAR.

Turning points in the development of the partnership

1. Working on the workshop and the survey for the programme grant together. Having a project with deadlines enabled us to grow the relationship further by providing a focus.
2. Working on the 'Making Sense of Allergies' document. This renewed our joint purpose and we got a great sense of achievement out of this project.
3. Collaborating with the Asthma UK CAR.

Continuing success

We really value the partnership with Asthma UK – both the contributions to project work and all the conversations we have that informally shape how we work and hopefully make improvements to the quality of the reviews and in time make a difference to the lives of people living with asthma.

This partnership grew organically, stimulated by a targeted grant and personal connections. But there are many reasons to continue building this relationship. For example, we continue producing asthma related Reviews (even though the specific grant has ended). Asthma UK provide good dissemination and communication opportunities and we would be delighted involve them in future priority setting work.

We plan to discuss this with Asthma UK and explore how our partnership can evolve into new areas, and what is needed to maintain this work. We are considering formally acknowledging the partnership with Asthma UK (and others such as our funders) on our website. We may also benefit from a regular mechanism to touch base and make sure we both continue benefiting from the partnership.

What next for partnerships?

- We are considering developing a similar partnership for COPD priority setting.
- It was very useful for us to write up this story and understand better why working with Asthma UK was such a positive experience. These experiences will help us in developing future partnerships. Only when talking about it, did we realize how much this partnership had brought us and how much we had achieved.

Tips

- Use conferences as an opportunity to make first connection with potential partners (look at list of participants prior to going: any representative of an organization you had wanted to connect to for a long time?).
- Have a specific and time-bound idea with which to approach the potential partner. Be honest from the outset about what you want and what you can offer in return.

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The Knowledge Translation Partnerships Working Group has developed [work-in-progress guidance](#) to help Cochrane Groups develop, strengthen and maintain meaningful partnerships.

If you have examples of your Knowledge Translation work that you would like to share, please contact Karen Head at khead@cochrane.org