Cochrane Austria

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

Knowledge Translation case-study:
Cochrane Austria develops a training programme for health professionals

This case study investigates the work of Cochrane Austria with their aim to improve the ability of health practitioners in Austria to be able to interpret and use medical studies, especially Cochrane evidence. The need for training was identified when Cochrane Austria was launched in 2010 and many health professionals in Austria were not aware of Cochrane or how evidence-based medicine works. Since then, a range of training courses have developed and implemented, including 'train the trainer' courses.

The beginning – a clear need – helping health practitioners in Austria to integrate evidence in their decision making

When we started as Cochrane Austria one of the areas that we identified as a priority was a need to better promote the use of evidence in decision-making in Austria. In order to address this, we identified that we needed to provide a programme of training for health professionals in order to help build skills in evidence-based medicine and how to use evidence in decision making

Working towards success

We started by thinking about which workshops would be helpful to meet our aim of improving the use of evidence in decision making. The first workshops we established were 'Critical appraisal of medical studies' and 'Medical statistics for non-statisticians', because these skills are essential to ensure work is evidence-based. Later we also provided workshops for 'systematic literature searches' and 'GRADE for guideline development', because of requests we received from interested people in Austria.

At Cochrane Austria we offer 8-10 workshops a year (maximum of 20 people per workshop). Most of them take place in Krems, where we are located. However, we offer at least one workshop in Vienna, which is easier for participants to travel to.

In 2015 we also started to offer "tailor-made" in-house workshops for employees of organizations like universities of applied science, health insurance companies, and governmental health agencies. These external organizations can choose from our training brochure ([German language brochure](#)) which covers a wide range of topics from a broad 'Introduction to Evidence-based medicine', which introduces the principle of informed decision making, through to very specific topics like understanding 'GRADE tables'. There are even courses on introducing Cochrane, Cochrane Austria and The Cochrane Library.
We also teach at our host University and another Austrian University because we think the best way to build capacity in health professionals is to integrate it in their basic education.

Mutual benefits

- Running training courses for health professionals introduces them to Cochrane and Cochrane Austria, if they didn't already know about us! It is good to make these connections so that we can better understand the needs of our end users. We invite them to our newsletter and inform them about options to join Cochrane. Building relationships with them means that they may become an advocate for us or, if they are interested, help with Cochrane work in the future.

- If an organization wants to, they can build a 'tailor-made' training course which fits their needs. This can range from a couple of hours to week. Training all employers of an organization (e.g., lecturers at a university of applied science) helps us to build capacity in EBM in Austria, because these people can then train their students and advise new colleagues.
- There is a course fee for each of the training courses which allows us to pay for the development of the materials and the time of the presenters to ensure the participants get the highest quality course.

Turning points in the development

In 2015 we were approached by an academic at an Austrian University asking us to provide training to some of their lecturers so that they could teach evidence-based medicine to their students. This 'training the teacher' programme allows us to have a multiplier effect, allowing our training to have much greater reach than just training health professionals that come to our workshops. We also hope that we are contributing to a new generation of healthcare practitioners leaving their universities who understand the work of Cochrane and who are equipped with the skills to understand and use evidence in their working lives.

Evaluating success

We ask participants how they heard about the courses. We have found that many people come to us through recommendations from colleagues who have completed one of our courses. At the end of every course participants are asked to give their feedback. We use this information to improve the quality of the courses and integrate new ideas for the next courses.

What next?

We plan to develop online learning tools in German, tailored to Austrian needs. We hope to be supported by Cochrane who has developed excellent online training modules and to join forces with Cochrane Germany and Switzerland.

Tips

- The "train the trainer" concept helps to build capacity in a much bigger audience than workshops for individual health professionals.
- Try to reach health professionals as early as possible in their careers; ideally during their Bachelor or Master programmes
- Once we had developed our training courses we put them together into a brochure. This provided organizations with all the necessary information required to put together specific courses depending on their needs.
- Think about where you want to advertise your courses; we advertise on websites, newsletters, twitter, flyers at conferences. We also advertise in a German medical newspaper.
- Get and use feedback from your participants; It provides a useful way of evaluating what they liked about your course and what could be done better.

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For more help and guidance about growing capacity of the users of Cochrane evidence, or if you have examples of you Knowledge Translation work that you would like to share, please contact Karen Head at khead@cochrane.org