

Knowledge Translation Case study:

Cochrane Nigeria works with journalists to help support evidence-based reporting

Cochrane Nigeria has a history of working closely with journalists to help disseminate Cochrane Reviews and advocate for better evidence-based health reporting. In this case study they reflect on how they have worked with journalists to be able to report on Cochrane evidence better through their established media roundtable discussions run in partnership with the Nigerian Union of Journalists, along with other initiatives.

The beginning – a clear need – helping journalists to develop their skills in evidence-based health reporting

Cochrane Nigeria began working with journalists as far back as 2008 when we held a two-day workshop on evidence-based health care reporting with journalists in Akwa Ibom State. This workshop was run in Collaboration with the Akwa Ibom State “Roll Back Malaria” Partnership and Jhpiego to help journalists develop their skills in finding and accurately reporting health evidence. In 2012 Cochrane Nigeria developed the ‘[media roundtable](#)’* initiative. This is a programme of face-to-face sessions with journalists, held about twice a year, to present the results of priority Cochrane Reviews relevant to the healthcare issues in Nigeria. The aim is to help disseminate Cochrane Evidence to consumers and the general public through mass media.

In 2018, as part of the World Malaria Day celebrations under the TIPTOP (Transforming Intermittent Preventive Treatment for Optimal Pregnancy), [Jhpiego](#), (a non-governmental organisation with projects in Nigeria) asked us to run a two day evidence-based health care reporting workshop for journalists as part of the activities for World Malaria Day.

Working towards success

The TIPTOP project sponsored a three-day programme for World Malaria Day (25th April 2018). Most of the first day was devoted to a press conference, which was attended by a number of invited journalists in Ebonyi State. During the press conference, the Ebonyi State Commissioner for health– Dr. Daniel Howard Akuna Umuzuruike spoke on the theme of this year’s World Malaria Day “Ready to beat Malaria – together we can”, the problem posed by malaria and the need for increased measures to fight malaria. He also briefed the press on the ongoing efforts by the Ebonyi State Ministry of Health to fight malaria and fielded questions from the journalists.

On the remaining half of the first day, and the second and third days, there were workshops for the journalists. Cochrane Nigeria was asked to develop and facilitate a workshop on the basics of evidence-based healthcare reporting. The session included topics such as:

- introduction to evidence-based medicine (EBM)
- finding evidence (using malaria in pregnancy as an example)
- critical appraisal of randomized controlled trials and systematic reviews on malaria in pregnancy
- evidence-based health care reporting, and
- how to navigate, read and interpret a systematic review

We found that the journalists were engaged with the workshop. They particularly enjoyed the practical session about finding evidence. Many of them used their mobile phones to produce searches and they were excited to find out about the information that they could access at their fingertips.

One of the other sessions held which was facilitated by Mr. Banji Olawole was about the use of Twitter. The journalists were encouraged to Tweet about World Malaria Day during the session.

Evaluating Success and lessons learned

The media roundtable has opened up opportunities to have a more in-depth collaboration with the journalists. From this we expect wider dimensions of engagement as the collaboration forges on. We think that the sessions with Jhpiego went well and it made us think about how we could provide more of such training courses.

What next?

Although we initially ran a training workshop for our media roundtable journalists, the times have now changed. Some journalists have moved on and been replaced by new ones, and the skills needed by the group have evolved in the years since we started. We want to run some new workshops for them covering more advanced topics. With fake health news being such a big problem globally, journalists have a role to play in being able to help mitigate the effects of this. We are looking to link in with an academic faculty in mass communication or journalism to develop a good programme.

Tips

- **Know your audience:** it is important to have an understanding of what your audience already knows. Think about whether you need to run a very basic workshop or something that teaches more advanced skills.
- **Be explicit:** information shared with the journalists should be explicit and documented to ensure the right information is shared.
- **Share relevant information:** the roundtable discussions usually focus on topical issues of local interest to get the buy in of the journalists.
- **Be mindful what to emphasize:** Journalists make great stories with numbers. The information that we want to be shared is not usually the burden of the problem but the solution to the problem; be mindful to emphasize the solution.

Moriam Chibuzor, Senior Research Officer (Communications and Information Science) and the Cochrane Nigeria Team

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