

Knowledge Translation case-study: Cochrane Nutrition – Working with strategic partners to support training of systematic reviewers in the nutrition field

Ensuring systematic reviews are relevant and useful for the end-users of evidence is a critical step to ensuring Cochrane evidence can be used for decision making. This links closely with the ‘Facilitating pull’ theme in the [Cochrane Knowledge Translation Framework](#).

This case study offers details on a collaboration among **three prestigious and influential institutions in nutrition worldwide** – Cochrane, World Health Organization’s (WHO) [Department of Nutrition for Health and Development](#), and Cornell University’s [Division of Nutritional Sciences](#), which is a designated [WHO/Pan American Health Organization \(PAHO\) Collaborating Centre](#) in nutrition, to address key challenges in integrating research evidence and public health policy, in the cross-cutting field of nutrition.

The beginning – a clear need – the need for reviews in nutrition topics to be used for policy making

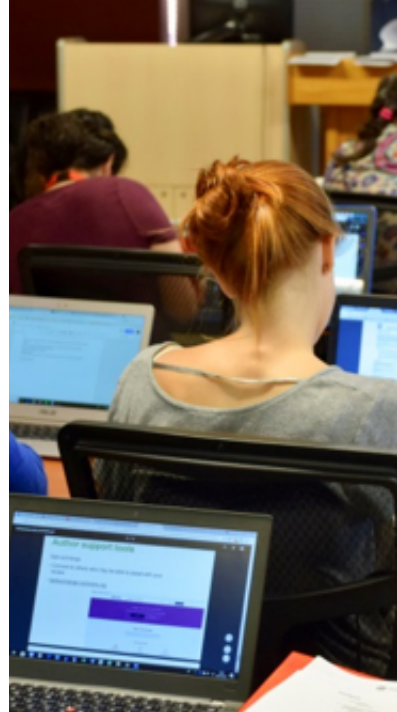
In 2014, WHO and Cornell University, with support from Cochrane and members of the Campbell Collaboration and Nutrition International (formerly Micronutrient Initiative) organized a 10-day training course for teams producing systematic reviews. The aim was to identify priority public health questions in nutrition interventions and then work with teams conducting systematic reviews to address them in ways that enabled the integration of the new evidence in the technical cooperation and recommendations delivered by public health policy makers.

Working towards success

In 2016, concurrent with the launch of the Cochrane Nutrition Field, Cochrane Nutrition Field leaders participated in the Summer Institute; their training materials on GRADE continue to be used by the course. Pat Cassano, Professor of epidemiology and nutrition and Interim Director of the Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University, noted that *“Each year faculty from Cochrane join us at the Summer Institute to share their unique expertise and experience with participants from around the world. There are challenges in reviews of nutrition interventions, including for example consideration of the background level of nutrition -and faculty affiliated with the Cochrane Nutrition field highlighted these challenges in their teaching.”*

Mutual benefits

- Participants benefit immediately by gaining detailed knowledge of the Cochrane methodology and from interactions with the WHO. Further benefits include understanding the path to make meaningful contributions to relevant, high priority public health questions.
- Cochrane Nutrition (and Cochrane as a whole) develops capacities to bring together scientific knowledge producers and users, and to effectively collaborate by integrating synthesized evidence with public health decisions.
- All partners benefit because the Summer Institute promotes evidence-informed decisions in support of global nutrition policy making.
- When WHO recommendations and guidelines are informed by the best available



knowledge it contributes to beneficial decisions and protects society from harm and waste, thus delivering a meaningful return of research investment to society.

- High impact research usually comes from team work, especially when teams bring different backgrounds and knowledge. At the Institute, team building complemented skill-building activities, and lasting partnerships and collaborations are being developed in the process.
- The partnerships benefit other organizations by aligning goals and by developing relationships and networks to promoting evidence-informed public health policies.

Evaluating success

- To date, the Summer Institute has trained 123 nutrition experts in retrieval, critical appraisal and synthesis skills of the evidence, particularly planning and conducting systematic reviews of interventions.
- Formal and informal networks have developed and contributed to the delivery of [28 Cochrane registered titles, protocols and reviews](#) (as of June 2018)
- Some of the achievements of these activities have been presented in reports and [posters](#) in scientific events, such as the Global Evidence Summit 2017
- Outputs from the training have already informed global public health policies and guidelines, such as: [fortification of rice with vitamins and minerals in public health](#), [fortification of maize flour and corn meal with vitamins and minerals](#), [WHO recommendations on antenatal care for a positive pregnancy experience](#), [infant feeding in areas of Zika virus transmission](#), among others.
- The WHO-Cochrane-Cornell University Summer Institute has contributed to the development of a cadre of experts in evidence-informed nutrition policies.
- Sessions are evaluated after each Summer Institute, and adaptations are continuously being made for the Summer Institute to respond to the needs from all stakeholders, and the evolving environment and needs of public health.

Tips

- The most meaningful outputs normally require time to mature; the most important contributions an enabled skilled expert can make will not happen immediately after they leave their training; they will develop, grow and increase their impact as they apply learning to their work.
- The Institute requires fees to break even and not all participants are backed by an institution that covers the cost of their participation, particularly those applicants from low- and middle-income countries. Hence sustained external funding for this type of activity and continued follow-up in the use of research for health policies at the national level is required.

Celeste Naude, Co-Director Cochrane Nutrition
Patricia Cassano, Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University

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 at khead@cochrane.org

