Core principles for dissemination:
a checklist for improving the quality of Cochrane’s dissemination products

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Trusted evidence.
Informed decisions.
Better health.
Aim of webinar

- Introduce the standardized Checklist and Guidance for use across Cochrane when developing dissemination products
- Time for questions and comments
The Checklist: Background
Cochrane Reviews disseminated in many different ways, to many different audiences

• Press releases
• Social media
• Plain language summaries
• Podcasts
• Journal columns
• Etc.
Ideally, each dissemination product should:

1. Provide a reasonable representation of the evidence
   • Information that is sufficiently complete, nuanced and unbiased

2. Provide a good user experience
   • Information that is easy to find and understand
   • Information that is useful and credible
   • Information that is desirable and non-alienating
Cochrane dissemination products: lots of good stuff, but room for improvement

2018: KT in Cochrane call for more guidance

Aim: to improve quality and consistency of Cochrane’s dissemination products

2019: Cochrane Norway begin work on Checklist/Guidance
Project aim: develop a checklist of core principles for dissemination…

…for people who disseminate Cochrane Reviews
The Checklist

• A tool for anyone preparing a dissemination product based on a Cochrane intervention review (e.g. review authors, editors, centre CRG, Field staff and multi-lingual teams.)

• Aims to improve the quality and consistency of dissemination products that present the findings of Cochrane intervention reviews

• Aims to improve communication with non-experts (i.e. people who are not familiar with systematic review methodology)
The checklist is designed for systematic reviews of effectiveness

But most of the checklist are relevant for other types of reviews and other types of research
Development in cycles

Starting point:
- Checklist article from *Centre for Informed Health Choices*

Methods:
- Literature review
- Advisory group
- User testing
- Example testing

Version 0 → Version 1 → Version 2 → Version 3 → Final version 4

September 2019
Checklist and Guidance
For disseminating findings from Cochrane intervention reviews

October 2019
Structure

The checklist: 1-page overview

1. Have you involved your target audience or sought their feedback?
2. Have you used plain language?
3. Have you used words in your title that your target audience is likely to search for, recognize and find relevant?
4. Have you communicated to your target audience that this product is relevant to them?
5. Have you structured the content so people can know messages, then access more detail if they want?
6. Have you made the content easy for people to quickly scan and read?
7. Have you shown that the evidence involves real people?
8. Have you specified the populations, interventions, comparisons and outcomes?
9. Have you stated that this information is from a systematic review?
10. Have you specified how you updated the review?
11. Have you avoided misleading presentations and interpretations of the effects?
12. If you have used colours to present the findings, have you used absolute numbers, and labelled numbers clearly?
13. Have you described the certainty of the evidence?
14. Have you presented the findings in more than one way?
15. Where the topic or findings may be sensitive, controversial, or disappointing, have you handled this sensitively?
16. Have you made it clear that the review was prepared by Cochrane and to whom prepared the dissemination plan?
17. If necessary, provide additional information about who the review authors are, how they were funded, and any conflicts of interest?
18. Have you avoided giving recommendations?

The checklist: with details

- Have you involved your target audience or sought their feedback?
- Decide what your target audience is, even if it is ‘everybody’. The self-identification of language and content
- When creating content for products, consider whether it is a possible to show the product in advance to a member of your target audience
- When developing product templates, or for larger, ongoing products, carry out at least one cycle of user feedback from 3 or 4 people who represent your target audience

Full guidance: with examples and references

1. 7 pages with details
2. Full guidance with examples and references
Before using the Checklist, know your target audience

- Topic/ findings of interest?
- Important, additional information?
- Time?
- Languages?
- Resources?
- Literacy and numeracy skills?
- Familiarity with medical terminology?
- Sources they regard as credible?
- Do they expect recommendations?
1. Have you involved your **target audience** or sought their feedback?
2. Have you used **plain language**?

What constitutes “plain language” **depends on your target audience**. But at a minimum:

- Use the active voice
- Keep sentences and paragraphs short
- Avoid abbreviations or explain them
- Use words and concepts that are familiar to your target audience
- Avoid research jargon
- Where you need to use medical terms or concepts, use them consistently and consider whether you need to explain them
3. Have you used words in your title that your target audience is likely to search for, recognize and find relevant?
4. Have you communicated to your target audience that this product is relevant for them?
5. Have you **structured the content** so people can find key messages, then access more detail if they want?
6. Have you made the content easy for people to **quickly scan and read**?
7. Have you shown that the evidence involves **real people**?

“I think it's a typical research site, lifeless, there's no warmth.”
8. Have you indicated the type of populations, interventions, comparisons and main outcomes that the review looked at?
9. Have you stated that this information is from a **systematic review**?

“...Cochrane Reviews are based on systematic and robust selection of relevant studies. We included 24 studies in this review...”
10. Have you specified **how up-to-date** the review is?

“The review authors searched for studies published up to January 2015.”
11. Have you avoided **misleading** presentations and interpretations of the effects?

At a minimum:
- Report the most important benefits and harms, including ones for which no evidence was found.
- Report all benefits and harms in the same way, where possible, using the same types of words, numbers or symbols.
- Decide whether it is important to specify the time point when the outcomes were measured.
- Focus on important rather than “statistically significant” differences.
- Do not confuse “a lack of evidence of effect” with “no effect.”
12. If you have used numbers to present the findings, have you used **absolute numbers**, and **labelled numbers** clearly?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mobile phone message reminders compared to no reminders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People: Patients with healthcare appointments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settings: All settings (primary, hospital, community, outpatient)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intervention: Mobile phone text message reminders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparison: No reminders</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Without reminder</th>
<th>With mobile phone reminder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attendance at healthcare</td>
<td>678 out of 1000 patients</td>
<td>773 out of 1000 patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>appointments</td>
<td>(698 to 854 patients)</td>
<td>(698 to 854 patients)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
13. Have you described the **certainty** of the evidence?

**Cochrane UK**

What is the best way to use nicotine replacement therapy (NRT) to quit smoking?

There is high-certainty evidence that using combination NRT (fast-acting form + patch) rather than a single form of NRT increases the chances of successfully quitting smoking, whether that single form is a patch or a fast-acting version (e.g. gum). Higher-dose nicotine gum works better than lower-dose gum (high-certainty evidence) and higher dose nicotine skin patches probably work better than lower dose patches (moderate-certainty evidence). Starting NRT before quit day is probably better than starting it at the same time as giving up smoking (moderate-certainty evidence).

There is only low- and very low-certainty evidence on safety of NRT, which was not looked at in most of the studies. Where studies did look at safety, very few people experienced negative effects of NRT and they were mild effects such as skin irritation from patches.
14. Have you presented the findings in more than one way?
15. Where the topic or findings may be upsetting, controversial, or disappointing; have you handled this sensitively?

“....quality of life was not one of our outcomes of interest.”

Seriously ????
16. Have you made it clear (a) that the review was prepared by Cochrane and (b) who prepared the dissemination product?
17. Is it easy for people to find information about who the \textbf{review authors} are, how they were \textbf{funded}, and any \textbf{conflicts of interest}?
18. Have you avoided giving recommendations?
Using the checklist in very brief products

1. Target audience involved?
   □ Partly. The target audience has been involved in the development of the template, but haven’t given feedback on this specific bigshot.

13. Recommendations avoided?
   □ Yes

17. Information about funding etc?
   □ Yes, through a link to the full review

16. Cochrane?
   □ Yes. Cochrane logo and link to Cochrane.uk

15. Topic handled sensitively?
   □ Yes. They chose the image because it’s respectful and emotionally neutral (rather than the head-in-hands type image).

14. Presented in more than one way?
   □ Not in this product, but they have a link to the full review

13. Certainty of the evidence
   □ Yes

12. If using numbers
   □ Not applicable

11. Avoid misleading?
   □ Yes, and they use standard plain language statements

10. Date specified?
   □ Yes

4. Communicated relevance?
   □ No. They haven’t defined their audience

5. Content structure?
   □ Yes, key messages clear and they’ve provided a link to the full review.

6. Quickly scan and read?
   □ Yes. It’s organized into clear sections.

7. Real people?
   □ Yes, they refer to adults in the text. They also chose a picture because it looked authentic, was the right age group and depicts the intervention

8. PICO specified?
   □ Yes, and they use the actual names for these rather than ‘intervention’ etc

9. Systematic review?
   □ Yes, they say it’s a Cochrane review and mention the number of studies.
How to use the checklist

• Remember the checklist is a set of principles rather than a solutions.
• Familiarize yourself with levels 2 and 3. Level 1 is only a reminder.
• Some items are easy to apply and check off, or are things you are already doing well.
• Use the checklist as a starting point for your professional development: focus on the items that are less familiar to you, maybe one at a time.
Questions and comments
Resources to use the Checklist

- Checklist, guidance document, and other resources available on Cochrane Training site: https://training.cochrane.org/online-learning/knowledge-translation

- KT products webinar programme in 2020 focussed on:
  - how to apply items (or groups of items) within the Checklist,
  - different types of dissemination products,
  - dissemination products for different target audiences
Resources to use the Checklist

• Further development of online resources:
  - online learning /interactive version of Checklist and guidance
  - increased support for individual dissemination products (e.g. ‘dissemination kits’)
  - case-studies of innovative and/or successful dissemination products

• Regional training sessions to apply the checklist to your dissemination products, and 1:1 support from peers trained in applying the checklist