Editorial policy update: rejecting Cochrane Reviews and the appeals process

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With thanks to Liz Dooley, Miranda Cumpston, Dario Sambunjak and ME Support

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Introduction

1. Focus on policies:
   • Rejection
   • Appeal

2. Practical implementation of policies
The Cochrane Editorial and Publishing Policy Resource brings together Cochrane's editorial and publishing policies, as well as general information about the editorial and publishing processes, and the published products, including the Cochrane Library.

Cochrane organizational policies are available in the Organizational info section of the Community site and the About us section of cochrane.org.

The Cochrane Editorial Unit welcomes feedback and suggestions for improvement. For queries relating to a specific section of the resource, please direct your query to the section editor listed at the end of the section. For general queries, please contact Harriet MacLehose (hmaclehose@cochrane.org), Senior Editor, Cochrane Editorial Unit.

View the latest substantive changes.
Policy development process

- Policy identified for development (new/update)
- Research
- Advisory group
- Research
- Consultation
- Revision
- Approval
- Implementation
- Audit
- Scientific misconduct
- Withdrawing/retracting reviews
- Peer review
- Appeals
- Rejecting reviews

Prominent areas:
- External
- CRGs
- Gap analysis
Rejection of Cochrane Reviews

- Rejection policy applicable to *unpublished* protocols and reviews
- Consistency across CRGs
- Transparency around decision making
- Provide clarity for authors
Rejection policy in brief

- Drafts (reviews, and protocols and updates of reviews) can be rejected at any time.
- There is no guarantee of publication.
- Criteria for rejection include (but not restricted to) quality, timeliness, competence, ethics.
- Authors can publish rejected drafts elsewhere.
- CRGs can engage another author team to take on rejected title.
- Guidance on implementation, including recording rejections in Archie.
Example reasons for rejection

1. **Quality**
The CRG identified concerns with the draft review which are not satisfactorily addressed by the Authors.

2. **Timeliness**
Authors cannot comply with agreed editorial timelines, and there is no reasonable explanation for the delay.

3. **Competence**
Authors do not provide adequate responses to feedback from the CRG, including peer reviewer comments and requests for progress reports.

4. **Research and publication ethics**
It comes to light that Author is employed by the manufacturer of the intervention.
Rejection actions in Archie

Once two CRG Editors (including the Co-ordinating Editor or delegate) agree to reject the Cochrane Review, three actions need to be taken:

1. Communicate the decision (workflow email templates)
2. Record the rejection in Archie
3. Abort the ‘In Progress’ workflow
Communicating the rejection

1. Inform the authors of the decision via workflow email
   • Rejecting a review proposal (5 templates)
   • Rejecting a draft protocol (3 templates)
   • Rejecting a draft review (3 templates)
   • Rejecting a draft update of a review (3 templates)
<table>
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<th>Type</th>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Default</th>
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<td>Information email</td>
<td>System wide</td>
<td>No</td>
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<td>Information email</td>
<td>System wide</td>
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</table>

**General**

**Name**: Authors to reply to Copy editors’ comments

**Type**: Ticket email

**Sender**: Current User

**Recipient**: Automatic (person task relates or is assigned to)

**CC Role**: Authors

**CC Person**: Dooley, Liz

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The image shows a screenshot of a software interface with a focus on a database entry for group management. The main UI section highlights the selection of a group named "Acute Respiratory Infections Group." Below this selection, there is a table listing multiple items with their respective details such as name, type, scope, default status, and created date. Each row in the table pertains to different reasons for rejecting drafts or reviews, categorized by quality, competence, timeliness, ethics, and quality/competence respectively. The interface also includes options for managing groups, templates, and detailed user settings, indicating a system designed for organizing and tracking tasks within a specific domain.
Recording rejections in Archie

2. Create a new Administrative note, using the Note Type: Editorial Management, to record the reason(s) that led to the rejection of the protocol/review. This should be a concise, factual description of what preceded the decision to reject.

- If the protocol/review was rejected for reasons specific to the Author team, add a factual Note to the Properties sheet of the relevant Person records in Archie.

3. Abort the ‘In Progress’ Workflow

4. Notify Editor in Chief

**Consider making the unpublished Cochrane Review/update of a Cochrane Review available to a new author team.**
Take home message

- Reject early and communicate clearly
- Avoid spending editorial time on reviews that are not up to standard
Appeals process

• Implement one process across all CRGs
• Clarity around decision-making
• Clarity for authors
• Consistency in appeals escalated to Editor in Chief
  – One appeal per Cochrane Review
  – Format of appeal (in writing)
  – CRG first, then can be escalated
  – Schedule of response times
  – EiC’s decision is final
Practical implementation of policies

- Look for announcements in the Reviews & Methods Digest
- Upcoming webinars:
  - Peer review policy & guidance
  - Plagiarism webinar
  - Retraction / withdrawing policy
  - Scientific misconduct policy
- Templates and implementation guidance
- A phase-in period, but implementation will be mandatory
- No structural changes to Archie (although improvements are planned for the future)
Resources

- Bryony Urquhart
  burquhart@cochrane.org
- ME Support
  mesupport@cochrane.org
- An edited recording will be made available of this webinar
Thanks for taking part

• **We value your input:**
  • we’ll be sending email with a link to evaluation form

• **Coming events:**
  • *training.cochrane.org/cochrane-learning-live*