



Identifying translators to
assess and extract data of
studies in different
languages for inclusion in
Cochrane Reviews

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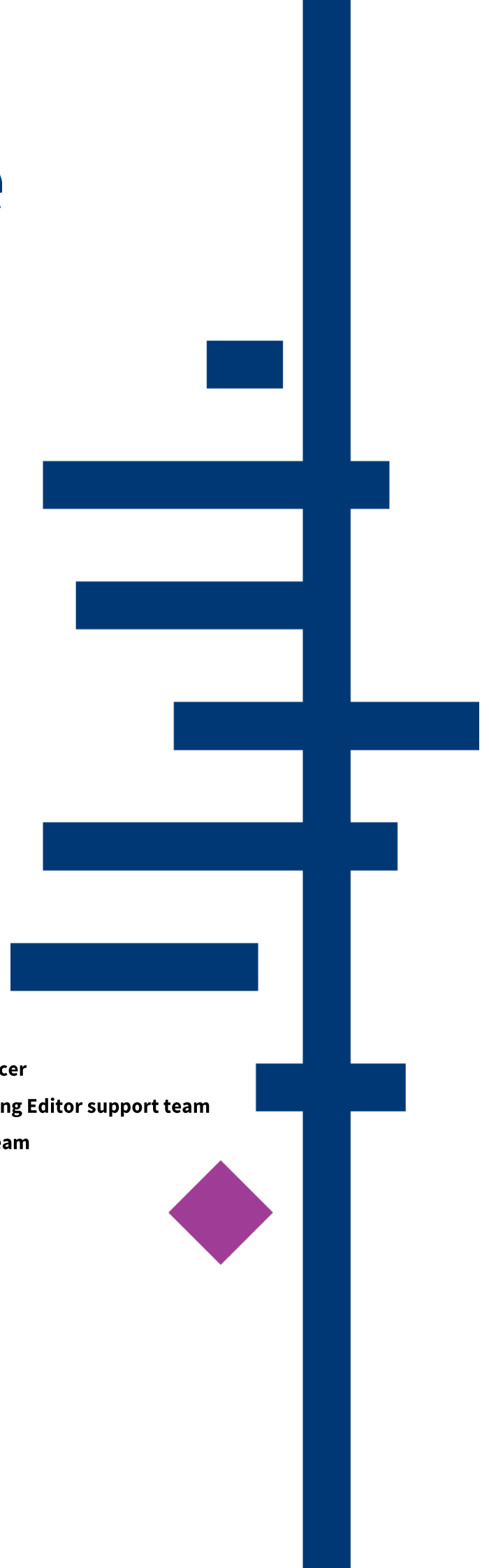
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The Cochrane Handbook states that Cochrane Review authors should try to identify and assess all possibly relevant reports of trials irrespective of language, to ensure that all relevant studies are included, and that no language bias is introduced in the Review (see [chapter 4.4.5, Cochrane Handbook version 6¹](#)).

If you identify studies in different languages as part of your literature search, you will likely need help from someone who speaks those languages to assess whether the studies meet your inclusion criteria, and if yes, to extract the data. If you or your Review group do not have contacts who can help, you can look for contributors on Cochrane's [TaskExchange](#) platform.

TaskExchange allows you to post a task that you need help with for your Review. Interested people with relevant skills can respond to your request and give details on their background and experience. Helpers are generally willing to contribute as volunteers and earn 200 points towards [Cochrane membership](#) when they complete a task. Translation tasks are the most popular!

Posting a translation task on TaskExchange

Log in to [TaskExchange](#) with your Cochrane Account and select 'Post a task'.

Include the required language, the number of studies and the Review topic in the 'Title' field.

Use the 'Description' field to give details of the task. Typically, this would not be a full translation of the study, as this can be very time-consuming. Ask for volunteers to help with:

- Initial classification as randomised controlled trial (RCT) (and/or other types of studies, depending on your inclusion criteria)
- Assessment of eligibility against your Review's inclusion criteria
- Data extraction using your standard form

Use the 'Skills' and the 'Describe your ideal applicant' sections to indicate:

- Required language
- Level of fluency (native speaker or bilingual)
- Basic understanding of RCTs and data extraction
- Subject matter knowledge (for assessment of eligibility)

If you need translators for studies in different languages, create one task per language.

Selecting volunteer translators

Volunteers interested in your task will respond to you directly by email. You can select as many volunteers as you like, based on the experience and expertise noted in their TaskExchange profiles. In fact, it may be advisable to select more than one (see below 'How many volunteers do you need?')

¹ Lefebvre C, Glanville J, Briscoe S, Littlewood A, Marshall C, Metzendorf M-I, Noel-Storr A, Rader T, Shokraneh F, Thomas J, Wieland LS. Chapter 4: Searching for and selecting studies. Draft version (29 January 2019) for inclusion in: Higgins JP, Thomas J, Chandler J, Cumpston M, Li T, Page MJ, Welch VA (editors). Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions. London: Cochrane.

Please provide your volunteer(s) with:

- Copy of the relevant study
- Inclusion criteria for the Review (it can be helpful to format these as questions, e.g. ‘Are the participants children?’)
- Data extraction form (when required)
- You may wish to provide some guidance to the translator(s) on how to use the form; and it can be helpful to have a short call with them before they start.

How many volunteers do you need?

The Cochrane Handbook states that at least two people working independently should determine whether each study meets the eligibility criteria. Cochrane also recommends that more than one person extract data from every report.²

In practice, you may be happy for only one translator to check whether a study is randomised or not. You should find two people to assess other eligibility criteria, and complete data extractions; one of whom should ideally have relevant medical knowledge.

When you have found the volunteer(s) you need to, please:

- **Remove the task from TaskExchange**
- **Leave feedback for your volunteer(s)**
- **Notify your Review Group’s Information Specialist and Managing Editor**

When you have found a translator, delete or unpublish your task, so it disappears from the list of available tasks. Log in to TaskExchange and select ‘My Tasks’. Select the relevant task and choose to ‘Delete’ (complete removal) or ‘Unpublish’ (the task remains on your profile and can be edited and reactivated the next time you need a translator).

You will receive an email notification when the translator marks the task as complete. The email will contain a link to write a recommendation that will appear on the volunteer’s TaskExchange profile for other task posters to see. View an [example recommendation](#) (with Cochrane Account login).

Please pass on any translations you obtain to your Review Group’s Information Specialist (CIS), who can store them in the CRS so they are available to authors who may want to assess the study for another Cochrane Review. The CIS can also make note of whether the study is an RCT.

Let your Managing Editor know the translators’ details so they can ensure the relevant acknowledgements are added to the review.

What if you can’t find a translator?

Most translation tasks get responses quickly. If you do not receive any reply after 2 weeks, check your task and make sure it is clear what you are asking for. Did you indicate the language? Did you indicate whether it’s an initial assessment, data extraction and/or a partial translation? Is it a big task involving a lot of studies? Maybe it can be split up and distributed to several translators?

² Lefebvre 2019 (see above footnote).

You can also actively search for translators in TaskExchange:

- Click on 'Browse network'
- Select 'Translation – linguistic' under 'Skills'
- Choose the relevant language under 'Language'
- Contact volunteers directly using the 'Send message' button on their profile

If you're doing everything right, but can't find any help, is there a Cochrane [geographic group](#) in a country that speaks the language you are looking for? Try contacting them. You can also check with Cochrane's Translations Co-ordinator Juliane Ried (jried@cochrane.org), who may sometimes be able to help.

If you still aren't able to find help to assess and include studies in different languages in your Review, according to the Handbook, they should be filed in 'Studies Awaiting Classification' rather than 'Excluded Studies', to inform readers that other possibly relevant reports exist, and reflect this information in the PRISMA flow diagram as 'Studies Awaiting Classification'.

How should you reward translators?

Translators should be acknowledged in the published Review, if they consent to this. Translators wouldn't qualify for authorship, unless they have contributed substantially to the "acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data" of the Review, see also [criteria for authorship and acknowledgements](#) in the Editorial and Publishing Policy Resource.

If tasks are posted and marked as completed on TaskExchange, they will count towards the translator's Cochrane membership. It is not possible to record points for translation tasks via Archie workflows. If you know or find translators outside of TaskExchange, you can still record the task on TaskExchange, to make sure that the translators can earn points towards their membership:

- Post your translation task on TaskExchange
- Email your translator and ask them to login to TaskExchange with their Cochrane Account, and to sign up for the task
- Select them as your candidate
- 'Unpublish' or 'Delete' the task
- Encourage your volunteer to mark the task as complete to earn membership points

Alternatively, email membership@cochrane.org and we can add the translators' contribution to the membership database manually, to ensure they receive their membership points.

As noted above, you will receive an email notification when a volunteer completes your task, which contains a link to write a brief recommendation. Please do leave feedback for your volunteers to enhance their TaskExchange profiles.

Some Cochrane groups also offer translators certificates to acknowledge their contribution. This can be valuable particularly to students who can add them to their portfolios. There are Cochrane branded template certificates available via the [Cochrane Community website](#).

Why can't I just use machine translation?

Good question! Machine translation has made big advances in recent years, particularly for the biggest European languages, and often produces texts with few or no errors. If you just want to get an idea of what a text is about, it can be very useful to run it through one of the common, freely available machine translation services, such as Google Translate or Bing Microsoft Translator. But if you want to be sure that a study meets your inclusion criteria, and need to extract the data, make sure to involve a qualified human.

You should also be aware that these “free” services usually do come with a cost: by using them, Google and Microsoft typically obtain rights to the data you run through them and can re-use it in many ways, depending on your country's data protection law, see, for example, [Google terms of use of your content in their services](#). So only use such services to translate content, for which you have the rights to re-use.

[DeepL](#) is one of the leading machine translation engines for European languages, currently covering translations between Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish, and does not retain any rights in the data you translate.

Further reading:

- [Cochrane Community blog: Sheila accesses 450 translators in seconds](#)
- [New TaskExchange updates! - July 2019](#)
- [Cochrane Help article about how to find translators on TaskExchange with screen shots](#)

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