

PHESA Newsletter

April, 2013

Volume 1, Issue

Public Health Evidence South Asia (PHESA)



Dr. Sreekumaran Nair
Statistical Editor CPHG

Dear Friends,

Public Health Evidence South Asia (PHESA) is a new initiative aiming to meet the public health evidence needs of the South Asia region. The initiative, which is part of a satellite of the Cochrane Public Health Group, is based within Manipal University. The major task of PHESA will be to build capacity to address LMIC priorities in the domain of public health. The satellite plan includes

mentoring reviewers for Public Health reviews from the South Asian region, production of review relevant to South Asian region, translation of the knowledge into policy through network of govt. and local level institutions. The activities will be headquartered in Manipal led by Prof. Sreekumaran Nair (Dr. TMA Pai Endowment Chair in Systematic Reviews and Evidence Based Public Health, & Statistical Editor, CPHG) and Dr. Ruhi Saith (Senior Consultant, Oxford Policy Management & Developing Countries Editorial consultant, CPHG).

The immediate initiative of PHESA include

- Mentoring reviewers and methodologist in South Asian region for conducting and appreciating systematic reviews of public health interest- Capacity building.
- Produce systematic reviews of public health interest to South Asian region- Evidence building
- Networking of institutions and individuals for capacity building
- Primary research including methodological development
- Knowledge dissemination and Advocacy.

We on behalf of PHESA and Cochrane Public Health Group invite you all to join and support this initiative.

With kind regards,

Prof. Sreekumaran Nair

Foreword from Dr. H Vinod Bhat Pro Vice Chancellor, Manipal University



Dr. H Vinod Bhat
MD, FRCP (Glasg), Pro Vice-Chancellor

This is the inaugural newsletter of Public Health Evidence South Asia. Manipal University is privileged to house this august think tank.

Low and medium income countries have a challenge on hand, addressing their public health needs. This challenge stems from the fact that there is little or no evidence of health

interventions or such evidence is scattered and free floating or the evidence is not acted upon. The network of evidence gatherers have a threefold responsibility of carrying out primary research, collate data of other researchers and create reports and to use the report to educate the population and influence policy.

I sincerely hope that this initiative will goad the member nations with a sense of urgency to address the most primary public health concerns for the larger good at the community.

Best Regards



Dr. H. Vinod Bhat



Prof. Elizabeth Waters
Coordinating Editor, Cochrane public
Health Group Jack Brockhoff
Chair of Child Public Health,
Director, The Jack Brockhoff Child
Health and Wellbeing Program

Foreword from Co-ordinating Editor, Cochrane Public Health Group

In addition to ensuring that our reviews are relevant to the South Asia region, we must also look at ways to interpret and combine evidence. Evidence can be generated through primary research in many different settings and if evidence synthesis is to be effective, rigorous methodologies are required to identify relevant studies, assess their quality and understand how the findings might be applied to the region. Under the leadership of Prof. Nair and Dr. Ruhi Saith, PHESA will look to train and develop the skills of researchers, policy makers, program developers, and public health professionals to interpret evidence and extrapolate the findings relevant for countries in the region. Professor Nair's work will also be crucial for driving forward methodological innovations for designing primary research and evaluations, synthesizing evidence and examining its relevance to the region.

During our recent visit to Manipal University we were heartened by the breadth of support for our collaboration with PHESA. We hope that our partnership will act as a catalyst for wider collaborations between PHESA, CPHG, Melbourne University through the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, the Public Health Foundation of India, and the numerous alliances and non government organizations addressing contemporary health priorities, such as NCD's, and common social and other determinants.

It is an exceptionally important time to kick off global health partnerships that can build on each other's strengths and tackle the significant challenges in an informed, solution focused, approach. We invite enthusiasts to join us in a joined up effort to improve the evidence, synthesize it soundly, and translate it effectively.

- Prof. Elizabeth Waters

The Cochrane Public Health group, as one of large collaboration of international researchers and information users, is committed to making a difference to health inequalities and improving the quality and access to public health evidence for decision making and knowledge translation. Our new partnership with PHESA ensures that our work will address the health inequalities that exist in low and middle income countries. We are both excited and proud to be partnering with the PHESA team; working together to understand which public health strategies work best to improve health and wellbeing, and providing evidence to decision makers so that they can develop and implement effective public health policies.

Through the production of systematic reviews, we seek to understand the effects of interventions on population health describe the overall picture of the existing evidence base and reduce the need to rely on individual studies to provide answers to important policy and practice questions. The CPHG group here in Melbourne has primarily focused on reviews addressing issues relevant to high income countries; our collaboration with PHESA will now ensure that our reviews answer questions relevant to South Asia and so are therefore able to make an impact on policy and practice in the region.

International Symposium on Evidence Based Public Health Interventions in Low and Middle Income Countries, November 7-8, 2012



Dr. K Ramnarayan
Vice Chancellor, Manipal University along with
Prof. Elizabeth Waters and
Dr. Ruhi Saith inaugurating the symposium

Dr. Sreekumaran Nair and Dr. Ruhi Saith

Manipal University in collaboration with Cochrane Public Health Review group has organized an International symposium on Evidence Based Public health for Middle and low income countries. The Symposium was held at Manipal on 7-8 November 2012 and attended by over 147 delegates.

Aim of the symposium was to provide an overview of challenges involved in the evaluation of public health interventions, so as to provide a strong evidence base. The symposium also discussed the role of the CPHG in synthesizing evidence of public health interventions through systematic reviews. It allowed a discussion of interest in, and the potential roles for, a Cochrane Public Health Group Satellite Centre for South Asian Region.

There was unanimous support for a satellite base of CPHG in the region. It was expected that such a base would result in a wider spread of topics addressed by CPHG reviews including topics of relevance to LMICs and the inclusion of more authors from LMICs as well as increasing awareness of the use of evidence for policy, and obtaining funding to help sustain CPHG activities in the region. Very importantly, it was felt that such a satellite could support access to literature (which was identified in the meeting as a major need) relevant to CPHG activities.



Dr. Ruhi Saith, Delhi



Dr. Nayanjeet Chaudhury, Delhi



Dr. Esther Coren, U.K



Prof. A Pathmeswaran, Srilanka



Exploratory Meeting for CPHG satellite



Initial activities of a satellite were expected to be directed towards two main Endeavors: capacity building and training that may include modules on evidence, public health, knowledge translation and systematic reviews in preventive medicine/public health relevant to the region

Given the positive conclusions of the meeting the CPHG has decided to apply for registration of a South Asian Cochrane Public Health Group satellite to be based at Manipal University under the stewardship of Professor Sreekumaran Nair who has been awarded a chair in Public Health Evidence, with a focus on the South Asian region.

Students Mentorship Programme at Manipal



Dr. Suma Nair

On 15th January 2013, a half day session was held at the department of Statistics, Manipal University to initiate the proceedings of PHESA (Public Health Evidence South Asia). Six medical students representing different semesters attended the session which was one of the first in a series of mentoring initiatives scheduled to kick -start the activities of PHESA.

Dr. Suma Nair, Associate Professor in the department of Community Medicine is the chief mentor. She has been involved with the Cochrane Collaboration as a trainer and reviewer of systematic reviews since 2004. She is a member of the Cochrane breast cancer & infectious disease group and currently has one systematic review in progress. She mentors medical students on short term research projects and currently is the PI for two ongoing community based projects in the field of cancer and tuberculosis.



Partha Dabke, Suhas, Arjun Chakrapani,
Manasi Gupta, Ananya, Vikas Sud

The participants were given an overview of the relevance of evidence in healthcare. They were introduced to the concepts of asking the right question and means of acquiring the right evidence. This then progressed to the concept of systematic reviews and the means of appraising it. The session was highly interactive and the enthusiasm of the mentees was palpable. The session concluded with the participants being asked to prepare a summary of a published review; one targeting healthcare providers and the other consumers.

Students Mentorship Programme for Systematic Reviews and Evidence Based Public Health at Mangalore



Mentoring at KMC Mangalore (Medha Alexander, Bansuri, Tanvi Das, Deepa Agarwal, Akshay Sethi, Rohit Shenoy, Abhishek)



Dr. B. Unnikrishnan

We initiated the mentorship program at Kasturba Medical College, Mangalore on Jan 2013. We identified 6 undergraduate medical students and given a brief overview of the systematic review and its importance in evidence based healthcare. Through analogies, anecdotes and simple exercises, coupled with an active interactive mode of explanation, all their first-timer doubts were cleared and the foundation was set.

After half an hour of an informal exercise, each one of the mentees went up to the board and chalked down their perception of a systematic review and the essential components that they thought should be a part of the process of the review, Dr. Nair explained the matter in detail using a review published in Cochrane library as reference. After having listened to the explanation by Dr. Nair and Dr. Unnikrishnan through this example, they were much more confident about being able to try a systematic review out by themselves!

Following this, they all were given a task to write a plain language summary of a Systematic Review. Having completed this task, they were eagerly waiting for the next meeting to delve further into the world of Evidence Based Medicine.

Dr. B Unnikrishnan, Chief of Mentorship program at KMC, Mangalore is Professor & Head of Community Medicine as well as Dy. Director of Student Affairs. He is a member of Manipal University Ethics Committee and also the member of Cochrane Infectious Disease and HIV/AIDS group, presently working on 2 Systematic reviews, one is accepted for publication titled "Pyronaridine combined with artemesinin for treating uncomplicated falciparum Malaria". Has published more than 80 articles in peer reviewed indexed journals. Is the PI for many research projects funded by ICMR, MOHFW, University of Alabama, University of Arizona, NIH, USA. Internal Mentor & Supervisor for the ASCEND Research network (Asian Collaboration for Excellence in Non-Communicable Disease) a US NIH Millennium Promise Award to support the development of an Asian Non-Communicable disease (NCD) Research Network over five years (2010 – 2014).

Health care researchers - Mentorship Programme for Systematic Reviews and Evidence Based Public Health



We identified nearly 25 researchers from various domains of healthcare from different institutions under Manipal University of both Manipal and Mangalore. We had 1st meeting on 11th March 2013, where we have discussed about PHESA activities and also given a brief overview of the systematic review and its importance in Evidence Based Healthcare. Following this, they all were given a Systematic Review to critically review and also to write a plain language summary out of it.



Next meeting was held on 4th April 2013, in which we had discussion about the all the aspects of the previously given systematic review. After that they were all divided into 5 groups and each group was asked to come out with one research question after 30 minutes. Then all the research questions were presented and everyone gave their critical comments on each of the research question.

Next we all planned to have 2 day workshop on protocol writing of systematic review at the end of the April.

Systematic Review Mentoring Programme at Madras Diabetic Research Foundation (MDRF), Chennai



Dr. Ranjani Harish
Co-ordinator, MDRF

Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF) established in 1996 by Dr. V Mohan, internationally acclaimed Diabetologist and research scientist and his wife Late Dr. Rema

Mohan, internationally known specialist in diabetic eye disorders. MDRF was founded with the vision of providing a world class environment for research in diabetes and its complications. Within its short span of existence, MDRF has built up strengths in basic, clinical and epidemiological research. The major strength of the institute lies in well-structured epidemiological studies that help the ongoing biochemical, genetic, molecular and cell-based studies.

PHESA has initiated a systematic reviewer's mentoring programme at MDRF. Twelve Research scientist doctors and epidemiologist working in the domain of non communicable diseases have been identified and enrolled into the mentoring programme. Onsite training, teleconference, Skype talk etc will be effectively used for this mentoring programme. We are looking forward to produce a strong group for knowledge producers and managers in the area of non-communicable disease control and prevention.

Mentorship Program at Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC), Delhi



CCDC Group at New Delhi

Centre for Chronic Disease Control (CCDC) is a New Delhi based not-for-profit research organization of health professionals and social scientists engaged in knowledge generation and knowledge translation for the prevention and control of non-communicable (chronic) diseases in varied settings of developing countries.

PHESA has initiated a systematic reviewer's mentoring programme at CCDC. Five Researchers have been identified and enrolled into the programme.

Mentorship Program at Population Services International (PSI), Delhi

PSI is a global health organization dedicated to improve the health of people in the developing world by focusing on serious challenges like a lack of family planning, HIV and AIDS, barriers to maternal health, and the greatest threats to children under five, including malaria, diarrhea, pneumonia and malnutrition.

PSI was founded in 1970 to improve reproductive health using commercial marketing strategies.

PHESA has initiated a systematic reviewer's mentoring programme at PSI under the co-ordination of

Dr. Nayanjeet Chaudhury. Ten Researchers have been identified and enrolled into the programme.

Workshops & Conferences Attended Oxford Visit

Dr. Sreekumaran Nair has attended the Cochrane Methods Training Event conducted by Cochrane Comparing Multiple Intervention Methods group at Oxford, UK during March 18-22, 2013. Methods Training Event focused on issues involved in comparing multiple interventions in Cochrane Reviews. It consisted of two parts: the first part addressed the statistical issues in indirect comparison and net work meta-analysis and the second part addressed the editorial issues in reviews with multiple comparisons.



Presentation in the Colloquium for Systematic Reviews in International Development at BRAC University, Dhaka

Campbell Collaboration in association with 3ie Group (CPHG) setting up the satellite for low and middle income countries- Early experiences” agency hosted a Colloquium and at BRAC coauthored by Sreekumaran Nair, Ruhi Saith, University Dhaka during 10-14th December 2012. Jodie Doyle, Rebecca Armstrong, Elizabeth Prof. Sreekumaran Nair, Director PHESA Waters presented the paper “Cochrane Public Health



Anusha Mujja
Research Assistant, PHESA



Melissa Glenda Lewis
Research Assistant, PHESA

Research Assistants

Two research assistants, are appointed to manage and co-ordinate the activities of PHESA.

As part of their academics they are also doing independent research project on methodological issues in systematic review of public health interventions.

UPCOMING EVENTS



For more details: <http://colloquium.cochrane.org/>

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