

Conducting a Cochrane review of prognosis studies – guidance for CRGs and author teams

The production of reviews of prognosis studies in Cochrane is following a guided implementation process, which is outlined in this document. Currently, prognosis reviews are registered and carried out under dual editorial procedures by Cochrane Review Groups (CRGs) and the Cochrane Prognosis Methods Group (PMG). A carefully managed approach to the rollout of prognosis reviews is required to build sustainable capacity within CRGs and Networks, and to focus on high priority questions.

There is increasing interest in and demand for the evaluation of prognosis studies. However, systematic reviews of this study type can be complex and challenging, and a few issues need to be considered before embarking on a Cochrane Prognosis Review. Cochrane and the PMG are particularly keen to ensure that reviews of prognosis studies address important questions and that the team of authors contain a balanced mix of the necessary content and methodological expertise.

Title registration

This brief guidance outlines what is needed for CRGs and Networks at the early stages of planning. The items listed here relate to the review question, the expertise available in the author team, and the editorial capacity. They are reminders of what should be thought of when embarking on a Cochrane review of prognosis studies.

1. Does the proposed review address an important clinical question or problem?

How does the topic map to CRG and Network-level priorities? Which decision-makers or stakeholders will be interested to learn of the review findings? Will the review contribute to a guideline in development?

2. Is there any possibility or plans for obtaining funding to undertake the review?

Consider what funding might be available to cover costs of training, methodological (including statistical) prognosis review expertise, IT or document supply.

3. Does the team have access to the appropriate support needed to get the review done?

As reviews of prognosis studies are relatively new and different from therapeutic intervention and diagnostic test accuracy reviews, they may be a bit more time-consuming. It will be impossible to carry out a review of prognosis studies without ensuring a balance in the author team between content expertise and methodological/statistical expertise in prognosis research or reviews of prognosis studies. Is someone with experience of prognosis research or systematic reviews of prognosis studies going to be an author? What training, if needed, will (members of) the team be able to undertake or need from the PMG? Unfortunately, the PMG has no budget for methods support on proposed reviews. The support will be provided based on availability of resources.

4. CRG editorial teams need to consider their own capacity and expertise before committing to support the review, and notably what sort of input from the Cochrane PMG is needed.

Is there an editor/author with experience of primary prognosis research? Are there editors/authors from other CRGs from the same (or a different) Network who might be able to mentor them or share experience?

5. What type of prognosis review is proposed?

There are 4 types of prognosis reviews, each addressing a different type of question. The PMG is embarking on 3 out of these 4 types of reviews. Please consult the [PMG website](#) explaining the different types of review, before continuing with completing a title registration form.

6. Are there any plans in place to share knowledge gained from undertaking the proposed review with others in the CRG and wider Network?

How will any new knowledge or expertise gained from undertaking the review be shared with others planning or working on reviews of prognosis studies?

The above issues are also addressed in the Title Registration Form, available from the PMG website (See <https://methods.cochrane.org/prognosis/tools>). Authors should complete the registration form and share it with the CRG. The CRG will then contact the PMG via cochranePMG@umcutrecht.nl. The PMG will peer review the title proposal form to see if the proposal is feasible. In case of any questions, CRGs can contact the PMG or the Senior Methods Editor (Kayleigh Kew, kkew@cochrane.org).

From title to protocol

After a title has been approved, authors start working on their protocol. A protocol template is available via the PMG website (<https://methods.cochrane.org/prognosis/tools>).

A protocol for a prognosis review should be written in RevMan using a flexible review format, however, the headings have to be adapted according to what type of prognosis review they are conducting (see the guidance in the protocol template). In the future, these headings will be made available in RevMan Web, but this is still in development.

Prognosis reviews are currently conducted under dual editorial reviewing with the PMG. In other words every protocol for a prognosis review will be peer reviewed by an independent PMG reviewer. Hence when a protocol is submitted to the CRGs, CRGs are asked to contact Anneke Damen (PMG coordinator), via cochranePMG@umcutrecht.nl, to obtain the contact details of an independent PMG reviewer. Other (content) peer review arranged by the CRG can take in parallel to PMG reviewing. A peer review template for protocols is available for use by all peer reviewers and can be obtained via the PMG website.

From protocol to full review

The process for the full review is similar to the protocol. A review template is available via the PMG website <https://methods.cochrane.org/prognosis/tools> and headings in RevMan have to be adapted according to this template. Full reviews are also peer reviewed by an independent PMG reviewer and the CRGs can contact Anneke Damen via CochranePMG@umcutrecht.nl to obtain the contact details of the independent PMG reviewer. In many cases the independent PMG reviewer assigned for the protocol, if available, may follow the review to completion.