

COCHRANE COLLABORATIVE REVIEW GROUP ON HIV INFECTION AND AIDS

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Cochrane Collaborative Review Group on HIV Infection and AIDS (Cochrane HIV/AIDS Group) is one of 50 Collaborative Review Groups of the Cochrane Collaboration. The Cochrane HIV/AIDS Group, with editorial bases at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and the South African Medical Research Council (MRC), Cape Town, South Africa, brings together individuals from around the world who share an interest in preparing, disseminating, and updating systematic reviews of rigorous HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, palliative care and pain management research as well as enhancing the science of evidence-based health care.

As of this writing in February 2008, we have 45 completed systematic reviews and 65 reviews in progress in all areas of HIV prevention, treatment, palliative care, and health care services. About 40 of the reviews in progress are at advanced stages of completion. We work very closely with our satellite editorial base at the South Africa Cochrane Centre, and have developed a mentoring program with them to assist new authors in sub-Saharan Africa. This helps African researchers to learn the process of conducting a systematic review, and helps us to be sure that the reviews we are conducting are relevant to the areas of the world most impacted by the AIDS pandemic. With colleagues in Manipal, India, we are planning to develop a similar program for novice authors in South Asia. We have also helped to re-establish the Cochrane Sexually Transmitted Diseases Group in Porto Alegre, Brazil, with Dr. Mauro Ramos of the Centro por Estudos de AIDS/DST do Rio Grande do Sul (CEARGS). We work with policy makers at the national and international levels to disseminate the results of our reviews, and have produced documents used by the Council on Foreign Relations, the Institute of Medicine, South Africa's Treatment Action Coalition, South Africa's MRC (at a national level), the US State Department, the World Health Organization, and various other national and international non-governmental organizations.

SIGNIFICANCE

Systematic reviews and meta-analyses are considered to be the best source of evidence for evidence-based clinical and public health practice. At the forefront of the evidence-based medicine movement is the Cochrane Collaboration, an international network of health care professionals, researchers, and consumers committed to developing and maintaining comprehensive, regularly updated, high quality systematic reviews of health care interventions across all medical specialties. More than 10,000 people from over 80 countries contribute to the work of the Cochrane Collaboration. Our own Group has over 200 active members from more than 40 countries. Our goal is to answer important questions regarding the state of the evidence of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care interventions.

INTERESTING FINDINGS

Some examples of findings from Cochrane reviews are listed here:

- Abstinence-only programs do not appear to reduce or exacerbate HIV risk among participants in high-income countries, although this evidence might not apply beyond US youth.
- There is no evidence that nonoxynol-9 microbicide protects against vaginal acquisition of HIV infection by women from men; in fact, there is evidence that it may do harm by increasing the frequency of genital lesions, which may increase the risk of HIV infection.
- Short courses of antiretroviral drugs are effective for reducing mother-to-child transmission of HIV and are not associated with any safety concerns in the short-term. A combination of ZDV and 3TC given to mothers in the antenatal, intrapartum and postpartum periods and to babies for a week after delivery or a single dose of NVP given to mothers in labor and babies immediately after birth may be most effective.

PROJECT WEBSITE: www.igh.org/Cochrane