Funding to support the production and updates of systematic reviews
Introduction

The NIHR is a global leader in producing and promoting high-quality research evidence to support decision-making in health and social care.

By removing uncertainties in science and research, systematic reviews ensure that only the most effective and best-value interventions are adopted by the National Health Service (NHS) and social care providers.

The NIHR Systematic Reviews (SR) Programme invests up to £16 million* per year into systematic reviews and infrastructure meaning that our health and care services have access to the best possible evidence to inform decisions and choices. Of this significant investment, an average of £1.2 million per year is spent on the production and updates of systematic reviews through two of the SR Programme's funding streams: the NIHR Cochrane Programme Grant Scheme and the Cochrane Incentive Awards.

Cochrane Programme Grant

The NIHR Cochrane Programme Grant Scheme was established to provide high quality systematic reviews that will be of direct benefit to users of the NHS. The scheme is run every three years and has seen two rounds so far, one in 2007, and another in 2010. In July 2013, applications were invited for a third round of the scheme.

Awards range from £220,000 up to £420,000 spread over three years (i.e. up to £140,000 maximum per year), and cover a multitude of health and research areas, from dementia to cardiovascular disease, public health & prevention to organisation of care in the NHS. Twenty-one projects have been funded to date; totalling around £7.5 million with the production or update of over 650 titles.

Grants are awarded to support a substantial and coherent programme of work that includes both new Cochrane reviews, and updates to existing Cochrane reviews. All NHS organisations and Universities in England are eligible to apply, in collaboration with an appropriate Cochrane Co-ordinating Editor or Editor based in England.

The NIHR Cochrane Programme Grant Scheme is an open, researcher-led call covering a wide range of topics; some examples of previous awards are detailed as follows:

- **High Impact Reviews of Effectiveness in Depression**

  By 2020, depressive disorders are expected to be the second highest cause of disease burden worldwide. In 2003, the cost of depression in the UK was estimated to be more than £9 billion, of which £370 million represented direct treatment costs. Treatments for depression are of key importance to the NHS, but decision-makers find it difficult to determine the comparative benefits and risks of the wide variety of available interventions. This programme provides reviews on the second generation antidepressants (where 53 new trials accumulate each quarter) including fluoxetine (the most commonly prescribed antidepressant in the NHS), as well as on psychological treatments.

- **Clinical and cost effectiveness of interventions for epilepsy in the NHS**

  Whilst epilepsy places a significant economic burden on patients, the NHS and society, evidence on the cost-effective use of healthcare resources is generally lacking. Epilepsy is associated with a number of co-morbidities, such as anxiety, depression and memory problems, that are of concern to patients yet are often neglected in services. Evidence about the effectiveness of interventions for these co-morbidities is needed to inform prioritisation and development of services.
NIHR Cochrane Incentive Scheme

For the past nine years, the NIHR has funded an annual scheme whereby incentive payments are offered to UK-based Cochrane Review Groups (CRGs) for preparing key new or updated Cochrane reviews.

July 2013 saw the launch of the 10th round of the awards scheme and is intended to fund a further 20 awards in 2013.

Co-ordinating Editors of all CRGs are eligible for the scheme, which has seen over £895,000 awarded across 179 projects since 2004. Each project awarded is for £5,000, with completion usually within nine to 12 months.

NIHR Cochrane Incentive Scheme example topics

Below are a handful of example topics that have previously been funded by the NIHR Cochrane Incentive Scheme, some of which have fed through into NICE guidelines(*).

- Treadmill interventions with partial body weight support in children under 6 years of age at risk of neuromotor delay*
- Antiplatelet agents for intermittent claudication*
- Statins for acute ischemic stroke*
- Collaborative Care for Depression and Anxiety Problems in Primary Care*
- Colloids versus crystalloids for fluid resuscitation in critically ill patients*
- Topical NSAIDs for chronic musculoskeletal pain in adults
- Cranberries for preventing urinary tract infections
- Services for reducing duration of hospital care for acute stroke patients
- Erythropoietin or Darbopoietin for patients with cancer.

For details of all previously awarded Cochrane Incentive Awards please visit:

www.netsc.ac.uk/systematic_reviews/cochrane_incentive_awards.asp
“The NIHR is proud to be supporting the production and updates of systematic reviews through these funding schemes. These funding schemes are a successful and extremely good value for money way of boosting review production, adding to the wider evidence base for health and social care decision makers,”

Professor Tom Walley,  
Director of the Systematic Reviews Programme