

Cochrane Africa Network Leadership Workshop

Cape Town, 2-6 November 2015

Cochrane is a large global network committed to conducting and disseminating results from systematic reviews to inform healthcare decision making (www.cochrane.org). Cochrane South Africa (SA) is committed to ensuring that high quality evidence informs healthcare decision-making on the African continent. One strategy to attain this goal is through establishing a Cochrane African Network (CAN) to empower Cochrane leaders in the sub-regional hubs to champion the Cochrane vision, mission and principles. To take this strategy forward, Cochrane South Africa (<http://southafrica.cochrane.org/>), with the support of Cochrane Switzerland (<http://swiss.cochrane.org/>), hosted a five-day CAN Leadership Workshop for a group of current and future African Cochrane leaders.

Course aim and description

This five-day workshop aimed to build capacity of African Cochrane contributors through enhancing leadership, communication and facilitation knowledge and skills. The learning was intended to empower participants to take leadership roles in evidence-informed healthcare within their respective countries and sub-regions. The workshop provided an opportunity for networking between regional contributors and key members from the global Cochrane network as well as partners and funders in the region. Participants also worked together to further develop and refine the work plan for the Cochrane African Network (CAN).

Most of the costs for the workshop were covered through a grant from the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries (KFPE). Cochrane Central Executive covered the remainder of the costs.

Objectives and learning outcomes

The workshop comprised of interactive sessions as well as time to develop the CAN work plan. Each day had specific learning objectives. The overarching objectives for the workshop were to:

- Learn about leadership, facilitation skills, mentoring, Cochrane editorial functions, communication approaches, knowledge translation and resource mobilisation to build capacity and opportunities for CAN members.
- Identify and network with key partners, collaborators and funders in the African region.
- Work together to refine the CAN strategy.



Feedback from the participants

Skills or methods learnt that participants felt were most valuable to their work:

- Facilitation skills
- Stakeholder mapping
- Fundraising approaches and strategies
- Conflict resolution skills as a leader



The most helpful part of the workshop according to participants was:

- Interactive nature of the workshop
- Facilitation with flipcharts and group sessions
- Group work on refining goals of the strategy



Conclusions and lessons learnt

- The workshop achieved the aim of strengthening the capacity of African Cochrane contributors to become leaders in evidence-based health care in their sub-region.
- The future CAN Mentors who attended the workshop are now equipped with skills useful for facilitating CAN training events and carrying out the activities of the Cochrane African Network in the countries in the region.
- The teams of the different sub-regional hubs will continue to engage and collaborate to prepare and deliver training events, develop evidence dissemination activities and to advocate for evidence informed decision-making on the African continent.
- Engaging with partners and potential funders is a process of building relations, something that will continue after the workshop. The participants were able to work and improve the work plan for the CAN which will be updated and submitted to various funders to obtain the resources required for continuing and expanding the work of CAN.
- Face -to-face contact is important to ensure efficient learning and relationship building.