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The Cochrane Back Review Group is one of 50 Review Groups that produces and maintains systematic reviews on the effects of healthcare. The goal is to provide the most up-to-date information to inform clinical decisions at the individual, institutional and policy level. The scope of the Back Review Group is primary and secondary prevention and treatment of neck and back pain and other spinal disorders, excluding inflammatory diseases and fractures. It is hosted by the Institute for Work & Health (<http://www.iwh.on.ca>), an independent, not-for-profit research organization whose mission is to conduct and share research with workers, labour, employers, clinicians and policy-makers to promote, protect and improve the health of working people. The Back Review Group also has funding from the Canadian Institutes of Health

Research and the Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health.

The editorial team is comprised of two Co-ordinating Editors, a Managing Editor, a Librarian, an Editorial Assistant, an Editorial Board and an Advisory Board that provides peer review. Completed protocols and reviews are published quarterly in *The Cochrane Library*, which is available by subscription on-line or on a CD. Abstracts and Plain Language Summaries are freely available by visiting www.thecochranelibrary.com (look for us under 'by review group') or the Back Review Group website www.cochrane.iwh.on.ca. Our authors, editors and peer referees are international, multidisciplinary practitioners and researchers in the neck and back pain field.

The Back Review Group's total contribution to *The Cochrane Library* 2008, issue 2 will be 44 reviews (including seven withdrawn) and 10 protocols (reviews in progress). It is the policy of The Cochrane Collaboration to update reviews every two years and to withdraw them if they are out of date. Of the seven withdrawn reviews mentioned above, one is currently in the editorial process and work on three more is ongoing. They will be republished once they are updated. Three reviews are permanently withdrawn and have been replaced with other reviews.

The Cochrane Collaboration has just released a new *Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* (February 2008) and a new version of the software (March 2008) used for producing reviews. There are several new features in both the *Handbook* and the software that have been developed to make our reviews more transparent and user friendly, and which will be rolled-out over the next year.

The Back Review Group welcomes consumers, authors and referees to the group. I invite you to join on-line to receive periodic newsletters that will keep you abreast of initiatives in The Cochrane Collaboration in general and the Back Review Group in particular.

I have provided a list of our published reviews and protocols and highlighted the ones that may be of particular interest to readers. Many of the reviews have been incorporated into international guidelines for the management of neck and back pain. I can be reached by email at

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