

Case Study: National subscription to *The Cochrane Library*, India

'Killer' fact

Free access to online, reliable up-to-date medical literature for nearly 60 million people in a middle-income country.

Summary

Wiley-Blackwell provides free access to *The Cochrane Library* in all low-income countries. However, an important component of the long-term sustainability of *The Cochrane Library* relates to demand, and this is particularly important in middle-income countries, who do not qualify for many of the free access initiatives. DFID funded Effective Health Care Research Consortium partner, the South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre, made great strides in this area in 2007 by lobbying government about this. As a result, the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) purchased a national subscription to *The Cochrane Library* for all residents in India. This allowed free access to all Cochrane Reviews. India is the only middle-income country in the world with a government funded national provision for access to the world's single best source of reliable and timely evidence for the effects of interventions used in healthcare.

The usage statistics for *The Cochrane Library* from India following the national provision (in late January 2007) showed a big increase in both hits and downloads.

- Before the subscription was purchased (2006) downloads of full text articles averaged around 500 per month.
- By 2009 this had increased massively to an average of 4500 per month.
- In 2009 a total of 54,522 full text downloads were generated.

The increasing use of the resources in *The Cochrane Library* helped in the discussions that the South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre had with the ICMR which led to the successful renewal of the national provision (2010-2013)

"*The Cochrane Library* is a comprehensive resource at the cutting-edge of evidence-based medicine, which helps practitioners and patients worldwide understand treatment options. We hope that this agreement will enable us to do even greater work in India and produce greater quantities of quality reviews." said Deborah Pentesco-Gilbert, Associate Editorial Director and Publisher for *The Cochrane Library* at Wiley-Blackwell. "We are so pleased to note that one of the top 10 most accessed papers in 2008 is authored by Indian contributors* – evidence of *The Cochrane Library's* role in furthering the global reach and international profile of medical research in India.":

Agarwal V, Abhijnan A, Raviraj P. Ayurvedic medicine for schizophrenia. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* 2007, Issue 4. Art. No.: CD006867. DOI: 10.1002/14651858.CD006867.

Professor Prathap Tharyan, Director of the South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre at the Christian Medical College, Vellore said, "This is a meeting of minds over the need to invest in reliable evidence in order to inform efforts to improve health outcomes, and an example of responsible leadership in health that governments of countries without a national provision might wish to emulate. We have seen an increasing number of Indian researchers contributing to Cochrane reviews, and an

increasing number of people from all walks of life in India using *The Cochrane Library*. We hope that this trend will help raise the quality of research and health outcomes in India.”

Impact

The Cochrane Library is accessed by numerous users from all walks of life in India. Wiley-Blackwell, the publishers, estimates that someone in India downloads an article from *The Cochrane Library* every 12 minutes. The majority of the full text downloads (84%) are from the *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews* suggesting that most people who use this resource are searching for reliable evidence of the effects of healthcare interventions.

Cochrane Reviews are quoted by many media sources in India and India ranks among the top three countries in the world recording media hits from Cochrane Reviews.

Research from the South Asian Cochrane Network & Centre using ‘Google Insights,’ a free to use internet tool that tracks the popularity of specific internet search terms over time, has shown that the search term ‘Cochrane’ consistently scored more frequently than top-ranked Indian health portals. Interest has increased dramatically since the provision of the national subscription. Interest was sustained, with peaks reflecting national Cochrane-related symposia and activities. ‘Cochrane’ also scored above top Indian and international journals.

The renewal of the national subscription to *The Cochrane Library* is a clear statement by the Government of India of its commitment to the use of reliable evidence to inform health decisions. India is the only middle-income country in the world to purchase national access to *The Cochrane Library* and invest in evidence to inform health decisions. There are many middle-and high-income countries where people do not readily have access to the evidence laden databases in *The Cochrane Library*.

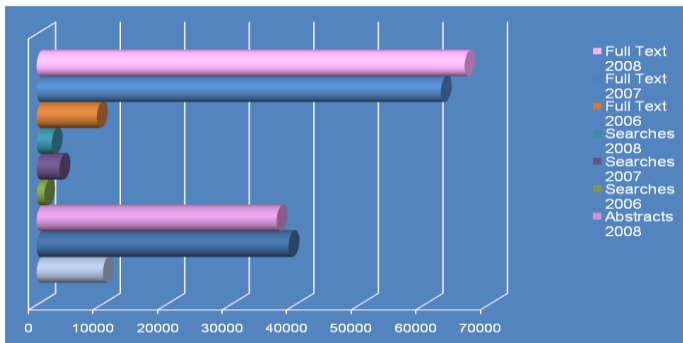


Figure 1: Usage statistics of full text downloads from *The Cochrane Library* by users in India (2006–2008). Data provided by Wiley-Blackwell with statistics extracted using Webtrends.

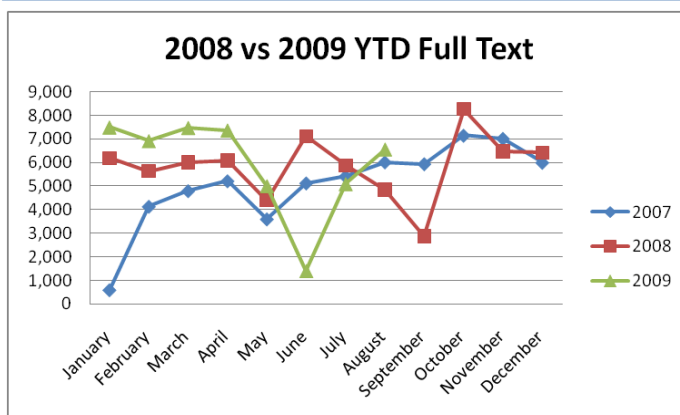


Figure 2: Usage statistics of full text downloads from *The Cochrane Library* by users in India (2007–August 2009); Data provided by Wiley-Blackwell with statistics extracted using Webtrends.

Further information

Web link to *The Cochrane Library*: <http://www.thecochranelibrary.com/view/0/index.html>

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