

Being a Cochrane Centre

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Italy is an interesting and creative country. Despite its low public investment in research (less than 1% of its gross national product) it has a good tradition of clinical/epidemiological research and the existence of a national health service infrastructure has made possible especially during the 80's to do good research at relatively low costs. The popularity of Evidence based Medicine has also grown substantially over the last ten years and one would expect a quite enjoyable life for Cochranites in Italy. Unfortunately this is not the case as a mixture of structural and cultural hindrances makes CC activities not easy to be financially supported and scientifically recognised.

The Italian Cochrane Centre (ICC) started its activities in 1995 thanks to the support of a research institution, the Mario Negri Institute in Milan, which has provided, and still does, infrastructure and personnel funds. During its five years of life the ICC has helped the birth of two Cochrane Centres (French and Iberoamerican) and has organised the VII Cochrane Colloquium in Rome in 1999. 115 Italian reviewers have so far contributed to 46 reviews and protocols in the Cochrane Library. The organisation of the work needs to overcome the cultural barriers of a country with very few scientific libraries and even less scientific librarians and a large number of health professionals that do not speak English.

The aim of this poster is to present and discuss the "survival strategy" developed by the ICC promoting general evidence-based type of activities such as teaching and training. Next year a one day course will be held for Italian librarians and a questionnaire on the use of the Cochrane Library will be sent to all biomedical libraries. We will present some of our projects and discuss whether these initiatives can contribute to the general struggle that the CC faces to insure its long term financial sustainability.