Making better use of available data for vascular dementia research, the role of systematic review and Cochrane

Gillian Mead, UK

Improving the efficiency of research is a key theme in contemporary research policy and methodology. A systematic and comprehensive synthesis of all the available data on a topic is an important first step in the research pathway. Collating and summarising data, prevents duplication of effort and can help prioritise large scale research investment by selecting those interventions that seem to have a signal of efficacy. The importance of systematic review as a foundation to large scale randomised controlled trials is recognised by many funders and scientific journals.

Cochrane is an international organisation of 37,000 contributors from over 130 countries (http://www.cochrane.org). The Cochrane Dementia and Cognitive Improvement Group (CDCIG) produces systematic reviews and meta-analyses about the prevention, treatment, and management of acute or chronic acquired cognitive impairments, their manifestations and complications, and the care of people affected. Currently the Group has over 200 reviews, including reviews of diagnostic test accuracy and a comprehensive, open-access register of intervention RCTs or studies of diagnostic tests in dementia treatment, prevention and cognitive enhancement: ALOIS (http://www.medicine.ox.ac.uk/alois/).

Cognitive impairment and dementia is a common sequel of stroke: the Cochrane Stroke Group has almost 200 published reviews, a comprehensive register of over 21,000 trial reports and the Group hosts DORIS (the Database Of Research In Stroke). Several of the Cochrane Stroke Group’s reviews have the main focus on the management of post-stroke cognitive impairment, and many other reviews include cognition as one of the outcomes. Cochrane reviews produced by these two groups have been included in guidelines and policy and importantly, have underpinned the development of new research. Furthermore, each Group has played a key role in developing the methodology for systematic reviews in their respective areas.

Biography: Professor Gillian Elizabeth Mead BA, MB BChir, MA, MD, FRCP

Professor Mead is a graduate of Clare College, Cambridge. She trained in stroke medicine in Manchester and Edinburgh, UK. She worked in Auckland, New Zealand, as Senior Lecturer and Consultant Physician in 1999. She was appointed Senior Lecturer in Geriatric Medicine at University of Edinburgh in 2000, and promoted to a personal Chair in 2012. She is a honorary consultant geriatrician and stroke physician in NHS Lothian, UK.

Professor Mead has an international reputation for her research into ‘Life after Stroke’, which includes cognitive impairment after stroke. She has published over 100 papers and holds grant funding in excess of 9 million pounds. She co-leads the UK multicentre trial of fluoxetine for stroke recovery (www.focustrial.org.uk) which aims to recruit 3000 patients. She is joint co-ordinating editor of the Cochrane Stroke Group and a member of the editorial board of the Cochrane Dementia and Cognitive Improvement Group and the International Journal of Stroke.