

Training Cochrane Systematic Reviews: Challenges and benefits of online training

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Background:

On line training has become an inseparable part of today's learning and teaching efforts. Medical experts are facing many challenges in their everyday clinical and academic life many of which can be solved through online training. Traditional learning opportunities are plenty, but are not affordable by some because of financial and time constraints. Iranian scholars in particular are facing new challenges to travel abroad.

Objectives:

This paper discusses benefits and challenges of conducting Cochrane Systematic Review webinars for Iranian scholars.

Methods:

Iranian specialists from eight Medical Universities and Iranians living overseas were contacted to join the webinars. I have conducted weekly webinars for the last two years, using self-paid software at first, and then Blackboard platform offered by Australian Cochrane Centre.

Results:

Five series of standard author training (12 sessions each) were conducted. I have invited experienced Cochrane trainers and authors to encourage the audience and provide hints for a successful registration. The presenters became mentors for the registered titles. Sessions were recorded on CD and passed around to be used by those who do not have internet access. The webinars are free of charge and provide a strong bond between clinicians and researchers in Iran and overseas. They provide the opportunity to get involved with Iranians living abroad, to access search databases, and to supply a strong motivation to join the Collaboration activities. However, the efforts are not without challenges. Lack of speedy internet connection in Iran, inadequate access to databases, language barriers and lack of local support for the authors is some of the difficulties that Iranians are facing. Strategies to overcome some of these challenges will be discussed.

Conclusion:

On line training is not without challenge but is fruitful and necessary for countries that lack local support.

