Increasing number of authors in Cochrane reviews

Objectives

• To investigate authorship trends in Cochrane reviews; both overall and within each of the editorial groups
• To examine if the authorship criteria from ICMJE were met for Cochrane reviews with more than 15 authors

Methods

• Included all Cochrane reviews from 1996 to 2018
• Data extracted from the Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews
• Assessed the section “Contribution of authors” with regard to the first and second authorship criteria from ICMJE

Key results

• Included: 7,447 Cochrane reviews
• Gradually increase in the median number of authors through the years (Figure 1)
• Median number of authors per Cochrane review (Figure 1):
  • In 1996: 3 (IQR 2.5-3, range 2-3)
  • In 2007: 4 (IQR 3-5, range 1-13)
  • In 2018: 5 (IQR 4-7, range 2-22)
• Authorship trends within editorial groups:
  • Increasing: 47%
  • Unchanged: 53%
• 27 Cochrane reviews with more than 15 authors (Figure 2)
  • 59% of the reviews did probably not fulfill the authorship criteria

Figure 1. The median number and interquartile range of authors per Cochrane review from 1996 to 2018

Figure 2. The total number of authors in Cochrane reviews with more than 15 authors from 1996 to 2018

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