

28 September 2018

To: Cochrane's CEO, Mark Wilson

From: Department head, the Nordic Cochrane Centre, Rigshospitalet, Peter C. Gøtzsche

Withdrawing the Nordic Cochrane Centre from the Cochrane Collaboration

It has become clear, particularly during the last couple of years, that the current leadership of the Cochrane Collaboration does not honour the basic values upon which the Collaboration was built 25 years ago. These fundamental values are collaboration, which is the first of our ten key principles, free scientific debates, transparency, openness and accountability. We also find it unacceptable that financial conflicts of interest related to commercial products that are being assessed in Cochrane systematic reviews are allowed.

Cochrane has significantly shifted more to a business - a profit-driven approach. Even though it is a not-for-profit charity, our "brand" and "product" strategies have taken priority over getting out independent, ethical and socially responsible scientific results. Furthermore, despite our clear policies to the contrary, my centre, and others, have been confronted with attempts at scientific censorship, rather than the promotion of pluralistic, open scientific debate about the merits of concrete Cochrane reviews of the benefits and harms of health care interventions.

There is widespread dissatisfaction among Cochrane centres with the current Cochrane leadership. Nine of the 12 oldest Cochrane centres have expressed such sentiments and the US Cochrane Center closed in the spring because its directors felt they could no longer co-operate with the Cochrane Executive Officer. The director of the French Cochrane Centre declared his immediate resignation three years ago for the same reason. He has only continued as director because the funding of the French Cochrane Centre is attached to him personally.

It is also telling that four of the 13 members of the Cochrane Governing Board resigned in protest when I was expelled from the Board after a show trial, and after having been completely exonerated for the charges raised against me by the law firm Cochrane had hired to look at the issues. The Governing Board has caused great harm to Cochrane and thereby to public health by their inappropriate actions and the ensuing lack of credibility in Cochrane. This harm seems to continue.

There are other Cochrane centres than mine that are currently contemplating to become independent of the current Cochrane leadership. We will continue to contribute to the aims of the Cochrane Collaboration, and we feel we are in a better position to do so as independent centres.

Yours sincerely,



Peter C Gøtzsche
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Nordic Cochrane Centre