

## 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Sylvia De Hann welcomed participants and thanked them for joining the Advocating working group.
- Participants introduced themselves and outlined their experience and their interest in joining the working group.
  - a. Chair: Sylvia de Haan (*Cochrane Collaboration, Netherlands*)
  - b. Members
    - Jenny Camaradou (*Citizen partner, UK*)
    - Jo Anthony (*Cochrane KT, UK*)
    - Lesley Stewart (*Centre for Research and Dissemination, PROSPERO, University of York, UK*)
    - New members being recruited - *see below in item 2.b.*
  - c. Secretariat members
    - Jeremy Grimshaw (*Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, Canada | COVID-END secretariat*)
    - Ileana Ciurea (*McMaster Health Forum, Canada | COVID-END secretariat*)

## 2. REVIEW TERMS OF REFERENCE

- a. Review of working group's terms of reference (see below)
  - On behalf of the COVID-END secretariat, Jeremy provided an outline of the rationale for proposing the Advocating Working Group (WG) and indicated that:
    - we are in a planning phase, this being the first meeting of the WG,
    - the secretariat is grateful to Sylvia for taking on the role of chair for this WG, and to existing members for their interest in contributing
  - Participants reviewed the terms of reference for the working group and indicated their agreement with the terms as currently articulated. They noted that as new members join the working group, the terms of reference may be further refined. *See detailed comments below under 'discussion and feedback'.*
- b. Discussion and feedback

### With respect to the terms of reference and the focus of the WG

- We discussed the need to clarify what we mean by 'advocacy' in the context of this WG (as it typically includes a wide range of meanings, across areas such as lobbying, awareness-building, or preparedness). We discussed the emphasis of our work as supporting the use of evidence and the advancement of evidence-informed decision-making in ways that prepare us globally to address future societal challenges.
- We agreed to focus the work of the Advocating WG in the coming months on three aspects:
  - reviewing proposals and papers from the Global Commission with an action-oriented lens
  - supporting the organization of a virtual meeting that Cochrane proposes to convene in the month of October 2021 in partnership with WHO and with COVID-END to address 'global issues facing the world of evidence supply- and-demand during urgent global health crises'
    - this will be a by-invitation event (provisionally scheduled for 5-7 October 2021)
    - the commission could highlight and provide input into the meeting
    - the output of the meeting would be a set of recommendations that would be brought to the World Health Assembly in May 2022
  - building on the support from organizations represented in the working group, to align and reinforce our messaging

- there are supporting communications mechanisms that we can count on, for example at Cochrane, Katie Abbotts's role as External Communications and Emma Thompson's role as Advocacy and Partnership Officer

- **ACTION: Secretariat to circulate the Global Commission document to the Advocacy WG members next week**
- **ACTION: Everyone to review the Global Commission document and share preliminary thoughts by email, and then be prepared to provide feedback at the next WG meeting**
- Other considerations:
  - contributing to the WHO statement on COVID-19 through individual COVID-END members if interested
  - considering opportunities for COVID-END as a whole, or for its individual members, to join Cochrane in signing calls for support of advocacy initiatives that are in line with our mandate
  - acknowledging and possibly leveraging:
    - the trend of empowered citizens increasingly interested in gaining deeper insights into how evidence feeds into policymaking, and
    - the evolving role of science and scientists in providing public education (during the pandemic some scientists have become visible and highly recognizable public figures with an ability to drive educational messaging that could include the role of evidence in decision-making at all levels, including that of individuals).

With respect to COVID-END's and the Advocacy working group's s legacy

- For the Advocating WG specifically, its legacy would be the successful release of the Commission's report (having supported the planning culminating with the virtual event in October and the release of the Commission's whitepaper).
- While COVID-END has been designed as a time-limited network, building the long-term legacy of COVID-END, beyond COVID-19, has been a key consideration from the beginning
  - We developed the concept for the Global Commission. The proposal addresses key considerations toward enhancing the global co-ordination and preparedness of the evidence synthesis community with the view to yielding substantial benefits in general and during future global threats, and to more effectively advance evidence-informed decisions.
  - COVID-END partners may be well positioned to carry on this legacy once COVID-END wraps up its mandate.

### 3. DISCUSSION

c. Areas of focus for coming weeks

- We agreed to meet in two weeks to discuss the Global Commission paper and the proposal for the October event mentioned above
- We will continue to recruit new members
- We will draft a work plan for the Advocating working group

d. Additional members that should be invited to contribute to working group

- We are aiming for a total of eight to ten members who would bring a diversity of perspectives (geographic, linguistics, gender, etc.).
- While most other working groups include members from the large group of COVID-END partners, our group is interested in adding members (beyond the partners group), with particular focus on members representing policymaking communities.
- **ACTION: everyone to think about who else we should invite, looking for strong advocacy organizations (not necessarily lobbying organizations), and circulate suggestions by email to Sylvia (cc Jeremy/Ileana)**

e. Frequency of meetings

- **Participants agreed to meet every two weeks for the next month and a half, and then revisit the frequency of meetings.**
- **ACTION: Safa to help book the next set of meetings recurring every two weeks (for the next four to six weeks).**

**4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Terms of reference for Advocating Working Group:**

This working group informs processes to prepare us for future societal challenges

- 1) To review drafts of a proposal for a commission that will review the COVID-19 response and identify and prioritize who needs to do what differently in future to support
  - a. evidence syntheses that are fit-for-purpose for COVID-19 and for future societal challenges
  - b. policy, practice and personal decision-making about COVID-19 and future societal challenges based on the best available synthesized evidence and guidelines (e.g., media/editors for the public, guideline developers and implementers for providers, evidence units in government for policymakers, and research funders for researchers)
- 2) To facilitate input on, and discussion of, the commission's papers and findings by:
  - a. integrating these papers and findings into the programme for a Cochrane-convened event on COVID-19 in October 2021
  - b. organizing a World Health Assembly side event in May 2022, jointly with WHO, member states, and selected commissioners
  - c. identifying and using opportunities to advocate for key issues informing the discussions of the commission, as well as for key messages resulting from the commission
- 3) To share organizational advocacy plans and activities among working-group members to:
  - a. identify areas of common interest in which advocacy efforts could reinforce each other
  - b. align, where possible, the messaging.