



# Introduction to Systematic Reviews (Online)

## Background

Health care policy and practice decisions should be based on a synthesis of the global body of evidence rather than relying on individual studies. Cochrane Ireland and Evidence Synthesis Ireland promote evidence-based healthcare policy and practice by supporting high quality, relevant systematic reviews and other synthesised research evidence.

## Aim

This workshop provides authors, at the beginning of the systematic review process, with an in-depth understanding of how reviews are planned and conducted. It offers an insight to the development of a protocol, introducing participants to methodology, search methods, data extraction, risk of bias assessment and meta-analysis.

## Learning outcomes

In this course participants will be enabled to:

- Understand the basic principles of a systematic review
- Identify the scope of their review
- Understand search methods and apply these methods to their search strategy
- Apply the criteria for selecting studies
- Understand the principles of creating a data collection form and of data extraction
- Understand the principles of risk of bias assessment
- Understand principles of heterogeneity and understand the methods for assessing and addressing it
- Attain a basic understanding of principles of meta-analysis

**Date:**

**22nd, 23rd, 29th, 30th  
January 2026**

**Time:**

**10:00 - 13:00**

**Skill Level:**

**Introductory**

**Facilitators:**

**Dr KM Saif-Ur-Rahman**

Evidence Synthesis Methods Lead, Evidence Synthesis Ireland and Cochrane Ireland, University of Galway

**Ciara Gleeson**

Clinical Specialist Physiotherapist, Respiratory Assessment Unit St. James's Hospital, Dublin 8

**Dr Eilayne Ahern**

Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, University of Limerick

**Places:**

**25 places available for individuals who are resident on the island of Ireland**

**Fee:**

**General €150**

**Student €80**

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## Target Audience:

Healthcare professionals, academics, researchers, decision makers and Evidence Synthesis Ireland fellows who have identified a review topic and are ready to begin working on their protocol.

## Teaching Strategies:

The workshop will consist of a mixture of short presentations, led by members of the Cochrane Ireland teaching faculty covering each of the stages of developing a systematic review protocol, small group activities and plenary discussions, providing participants with the opportunity to develop and refine their protocol. This course will include blended learning with two months free access to Cochrane Interactive Learning self-directed learning modules, a number of which will be required study prior to the workshop.

## Course timetable

Day 1 – 22nd January 2026	
<b>Pre-learning:</b> Have completed below modules from Cochrane Interactive Learning <b>Module 1:</b> Introduction to conducting systematic reviews <b>Module 2:</b> Writing the review protocol <b>Module 3:</b> Searching for studies	
10:00	Welcome, introduction of presenters
10:15	Defining a review question – defining objectives and creating a PICO
10:45	Practical exercise with PICO development
11:00	Practical exercise feedback
11:15	Break
11:30	Writing a protocol
12:00	Identifying search terms and searching for relevant studies in a systematic way
12:30	Practical exercise: developing a search strategy
12:45	Practical exercise feedback
13:00	Close

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Day 2 – 23rd January 2026	
<b>Pre-learning:</b> Have completed below modules from Cochrane Interactive Learning <b>Module 4:</b> Selecting studies and collecting data <b>Module 5:</b> Introduction to study quality and risk of bias	
10:00	Recap and questions on previous workshop
10:30	Selecting studies
11:00	Break
11:15	Practical exercise : assessing eligibility
11:45	Practical exercise feedback
12:15	Assessing risk of bias (2.0)
13:00	Close
Day 3 – 29th January 2026	
<b>Pre-learning:</b> Have completed below module from Cochrane Interactive Learning <b>Recap on Module 5:</b> Introduction to study quality and risk of bias	
10:00	Recap and questions on previous workshop
10:30	Practical exercise on Risk of bias
11:00	Break
11:15	Practical exercise feedback
11:45	Data extraction and management; different types and formats of outcome data
12:15	Practical exercise on Data collection/extraction and management
12:35	Practical exercise feedback & open Q&A
13:00	Close

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Day 4 – 30th January 2026	
Pre-learning: Have completed below module from Cochrane Interactive Learning Module 6: Analysing the data	
10:00	Recap and questions on previous workshop
10:30	Analysis methods for binary data (odds ratio, risk ratio)
11:00	Analysis methods for continuous data (mean difference, standardised mean difference)
11:30	Break
11:45	Introduction to meta-analysis
12:30	Exploring heterogeneity; subgroup analysis and sensitivity analysis
13:00	Discussion and questions
13:30	Close

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