

Cochrane Heart Group Interview with Mehul Srivastava, Author in Residence September 2019 – January 2020

Marianna (Cochrane Heart):

Please introduce yourself and tell us your clinical and research background

Mehul:

Thanks Marianna. I'm Dr Srivastava, I'm a critical care resident and coma registrar in Melbourne Australia. I'm working at the Alfred hospital, getting a lot of good critical care experience. It's one of the biggest trauma centers, but last year I wanted a break from clinical medicine. So I came to London, pursued some traveling and life goals, but also wanted to focus more on the research and teaching part of it. I became interested in research quite early on doing a honors thesis in my undergraduate years. And that's stepped my way into my master of public health as well. I'm now an honorary research fellow with the University College London. The role does involve a teaching element for the undergraduate medical students, but it is primarily working with the Cochrane Heart group, leading a systematic review in acute heart failure.

Marianna:

Please tell us what your experience as an Author in Residence with Cochrane Heart September 2019 to January 2020 entailed

Mehul:

I met with Dr Rui Providencia and Nicole Martin in August 2019. They are the Coordinating and Managing Editors of Cochrane Heart Group respectively. They were warm, friendly, and very good at collaborating. We worked out what they had to offer and what my skillset experience and goals were. And we were able to have an open discussion about how to make that work together. So then from September to January, we started working on the review, which meant recruiting authors, clarifying the research question, working on the proposal, the protocol, as well as for me to get training into a Cochrane systematic review.

I came into the office at Euston Road twice a week. I tried to match when Nicole was in the office and this had some great advantages: I could troubleshoot everything straightaway, any questions I had, it was such an informal way to solve it, and it also helped me build a relationship with the team. In that time I also met Audrey Tan who was the Network Support Fellow and Charlene Bridges, the Information Specialist. They're not just people that I'm emailing or a name, it's nice to actually have that personal relationship. And so even though I'm back in Melbourne, I think it's serving me well, knowing the team.

Marianna:

And how has it helped your ongoing work as a clinician and researcher?

Mehul:

I think that's an interesting question because there are definitely a few elements to it. I think the first part is that because you're an Author in Residence it gives you the best chance of being the contact person and project manager for the review, which really helps to develop your leadership skills and your project management. And that will come to serve you well, both as a researcher and a clinician.

Secondly, from a research aspect alone, you really learn what good critical thinking and good methodology looks like when you're working with Cochrane. It's really setting the standard for good quality evidence. It's been a fantastic learning opportunity from that perspective. And I'd probably say lastly, a surprising positive that's come out of this is experiencing the work culture. It's very different to being in the hospital. The work culture is very flexible, accountable and very collaborative, especially at a global level.

So I've now got ties in North America, around the UK and Australia, and that's something that's been great coming out of this. I think in particular with Cochrane Heart Group - it's located within UCL – and having that university tie with one of the leading universities in the world, you get a lot of opportunities to learn. That's something I'm going to take with me, both in my research and clinical work.

Marianna:

Lastly, what would you say to anyone interested in becoming an Author in Residence with Cochrane Heart?

I think don't be afraid. It can seem like a daunting prospect to do a Cochrane review, but being an author in residence has alleviated those fears for me. I think the positive work culture and personal relationships you'll cultivate can really hold you in good stead. And lastly, just get in touch, I think have a clear sense of what you can offer, what your skill sets include and what your goals are, and then be flexible in collaborating with Cochrane. And, you know, you'll be surprised at what you might get out of it. I definitely was. And I do encourage anyone who was thinking about it to just get in touch.