The use of Cochrane reviews in an African first aid and prevention guideline for laypeople

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Background
First aid: "Immediate help provided to a sick or injured person until professional help arrives. First aid interventions seek to preserve life, alleviate suffering, prevent further illness or injury and promote recovery." (IFRC)

The Belgian Red Cross develops evidence-based first aid and prevention guidelines for laypeople, not only for the Belgian context, but also for other countries, such as India, Nepal and Sub-Saharan Africa. A first aid and prevention manual for Sub-Saharan Africa was developed in 2011 and updated in 2016.

Objectives
To investigate whether Cochrane reviews are useful for the development of African first aid and prevention guidelines for laypeople.

Methods
114 PICO questions were composed for 20 topics (e.g. 'Injuries to muscles, joints or limbs'). Search strategies were developed for each PICO question (e.g. In humans (P), are stretching exercises (I) effective for the treatment or prevention of muscle cramps (O) compared to no stretching exercises (C)?) to collect, analyze and synthesize relevant systematic reviews and individual studies.

Results

Conclusions
- Some topics ('Injuries to muscles, joints or limbs', 'Poisoning', 'Diarrhoea' and 'Emergency childbirth') are fairly covered by Cochrane SRs.
- For first aid and prevention guidelines aimed at laypeople: still a large gap for which no Cochrane SRs are available, or Cochrane SRs are out-of-date.
- Closer collaboration between Cochrane review groups and guideline developers would be relevant to enhance uptake of Cochrane SRs into practice.