1. Background: Cochrane welcomes comments on published Cochrane Reviews and Protocols via the Cochrane Library. Seeking and responding to comments, and the transparency of that process, are important parts of the scientific process and publication ethics. Alongside this, Cochrane Reviews or Protocols can be amended or updated, if warranted, in response to comments, with the ultimate aim of improving the quality and usefulness of the published review or protocol.

2. Aim of this study: To understand more about who is submitting comments, when the comments are being submitted, what topics are being commented on, and what aspects of the review are being commented on.

3. What we did: We looked at all comments received during 2017, and we analysed the information we had received on comment contributors’ roles, affiliations, and location. We also looked at a sample of 60 Comments received during 2017 and categorized the comments according to the aspects addressed by the comment.

4. Findings

4.1 Number of Comments: In 2017 a total of 140 Comments were received on the Cochrane Library, of which 123 were assessed as relevant and coherent and were passed to the relevant Cochrane Review Groups. Our further analyses focused only on these 123 Comments.

4.2 Timing of Comments:

4.3 Which subject areas attracted Comments?
The 123 Comments were distributed over 44 Cochrane Review Groups, with 8 Groups receiving no Comments, and 7 Groups receiving 5 or more Comments (Figure 2).

4.4 Where do Comments come from?
We looked at how Comment contributors described themselves in terms of their role (Figure 4) and affiliation (Figure 5). This information is not mandatory when submitting a Comment, so in many cases this information was not known.

4.5 What are people commenting about?
We looked at a sample of 62 Comments (about half of the total) received in 2017. We read the Comments and categorised them according to the aspects raised in the Comment. Some comments raised multiple aspects. In the case of 7 Comments they were so broad or wide-ranging in scope that we did not attempt to categorise the components. Figure 7 shows the spread of topics for the remaining 55 Comments.

5. Discussion:
• The number of Comments received is quite low, but a large proportion of the Comments are valuable.
• Comments are more likely on Cochrane Reviews of topics of wide interest, with fewer Comments on cancers.
• Comment contributors are generally a mix of academics, healthcare professionals, and Cochrane-affiliated people, with at least 8% of Comments from consumers, but our data are limited.
• The Comment system is predominantly (90%) used by people from North America and Europe.
• Comments cover a very wide range of topics, and many Comments are detailed and wide-ranging.