



NEWSLETTER #135 January 2025 See [ABOUT](#) WIKISTIM

Outdated News

Readers of this newsletter learn about the latest publications in our field as well as the implications of selected newsworthy papers. In March 2023, [we reported](#) a 10-day old publication of a Cochrane review by [Traeger et al.](#), and we presented the first analysis of its shortcomings. As our readers are aware, in the ensuing 22 months, numerous third parties published criticisms to which Traeger et al. responded on the Cochrane website, in prominent medical journals, and in the lay press. (See our newsletters from [January 2024](#), [July 2024](#), and [December 2024](#) and our [Discussion section](#).)

This month, the *International Journal of Rheumatic Diseases* caught our attention with an article by [Chan and Engkasan](#) entitled, “What are the effects of spinal cord stimulation for people with low back pain? A Cochrane review summary with commentary. Submitted to the host journal on December 10, 2024 and accepted 13 days later, this paper is an uncritical summary of the Traeger report organized into sections based on the types of questions a college student might encounter on an exam (covering the aim of the Cochrane review, what was studied, the methodology, the main results, and the conclusion). The journal prefaced the article by noting that after “discussing” the Cochrane review, the “views” of the authors appear in the “implications for practice” section that ends their paper. In this case, these “views” simply parrot the conclusions reached by Traeger and fail to offer the merest hint of the ensuing controversy. Did Chan and Engkasan search the literature sufficiently to be aware that Traeger’s methodology and, thus, findings have been challenged? We note that this is [the sixth](#) “Cochrane review summary with commentary” that Engkasan has published.

The “Information Age” has not obviated the propagation of misinformation, which can creep into institutions and official systems through inattention ([Musi and Rocci 2022](#); [Ruokolainen et al. 2023](#)) and gains strength through repetition—a phenomenon known as “the illusory truth effect” ([Hasan and Barber 2021](#)). Notwithstanding guidelines in authoritative publications (viz. JAMA, which we have cited often) [Jefferson et al.](#)

[2002; Shaneyfelt et al.1999](#)), the editorial and peer review processes are not infallible. Publications that are outdated and fail to cite pertinent literature continue to appear and are a disservice to readers. Fortunately, we have resources such as this newsletter, our WIKISTIM Discussion section, and letters to the editor to counter flawed reports on spinal cord stimulation.

Just as authors claim to use the principles of “evidence-based medicine”(EBM) to assess the effectiveness of spinal cord stimulation, in 2012, we published a paper examining what spinal cord stimulation tells us about the practice of EBM (North and Shipley, 2012) and listed the important points that need to be addressed in order to provide reliable evidence--points often neglected by authors of reviews and by peer reviewers alike. We repeated this list in 2023 in a letter to the editor in response to another problematic review of SCS ([North and Shipley, 2023](#)): SCS studies must use appropriate patient selection; sufficiently experienced implanting clinicians; best practices for the interventions, including accepted screening and treatment protocols to ensure patient safety and efficacy; and generally accepted outcome measures.“ Of course, one has to have a deep understanding of the practice and study of SCS to answer these questions. In 2012, we concluded that “we lack good evidence that the practice of EBM [including publication of Cochrane reviews] enhances patient care.” The new article by [Chan et al.](#) is a missed opportunity.

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Anniversary

January 15th is the 24th anniversary of the online encyclopedia Wikipedia, and thus of the popular use of the prefix “wiki.” As [reported](#) yesterday, the Hawaiian term “wiki” means “quick.” From its inception in 2013, Wikistim.org has been “quick” in that we provide immediate access to a large curated data collection. Since 2015, we’ve provided a monthly update reading list to our users. And most recently, we’ve provided critical commentary on select, newsworthy publications, well before other sources. Wikipedia, with its emphasis on the collaborative editing of content, was the inspiration for our name and website. We continue to welcome and support collaboration from the members of our community.

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We remind our readers that it might be necessary to click “View Entire Message” in our email to see all of the citation lists in this newsletter.

We only list correction citations if the error was substantial. For small changes, such as a missing initial in an author's name, we simply update the WIKISTIM database

Deep Brain Stimulation (now 8767 citations)

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