

2nd MEETING

27th September 2001, Food Standards Agency, Aviation House, 125 Kingsway, LONDON

MINUTES

Chairman	Professor Alan Jackson
Members	Professor Peter Aggett Professor Sheila Bingham Professor John Cummings Miss Gill Fine Ms Paulette Jones Dr Timothy Key Professor Peter Kopelman Dr Ann Prentice Professor Andrew Rugg-Gunn Dr Anita Thomas Mrs Stella Walsh Dr Anthony Williams Professor Christine Williams
Government Assessors	Ms Imogen Sharp (DH) Mr Tom Murray (FSA) Dr Martin Donaghy (Scottish Executive, Health Department)
Secretariat	Dr Lisa Jackson (FSA) Dr Sheela Reddy (DH) Ms Orla Yeates (FSA) Dr Adrienne Cullum (DH) Mr Fayaz Aziz (DH) Miss Tracey Dean (FSA) Mr Jeff Alder (FSA) morning only
Attending Agenda item 5/6 as infant feeding advisor	Ms Christine Carson (DH)

Chair's Introduction

1. The Chair welcomed Members to the second meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition, and the new staff members to the Secretariat, Mr Jeff Alder of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and Mr Fayaz Aziz of Department of Health (DH).
2. The Chair asked Committee Members to let him know if they had any other issues to add to the agenda under Any Other Business.

Apologies for absence

3. Apologies for absence were received from Professor Annie Anderson and Dr Ginny Blakey.

Agenda Item 1: Minutes of last meeting (12&13/06/01) SACN /01/min 01

4. Members were invited to comment on the minutes of the previous meeting. The Committee agreed that the finalised minutes would be agreed by post pending any changes within two days of receiving the amended copy.

Agenda Item 2: Code of Practice - revisited SACN/01/01A

5. The Chair drew the attention of Committee Members to clarifications in the revised Code of Practice regarding declarations of conflict of interest and indemnity (paragraph 8.1, paragraph 9.1). **Committee Members agreed the Code of Practice.** Members will be asked for a declaration of interests annually but if they have any new interests to declare during the year they should contact the Secretariat. Any interests directly related to discussions at Committee meetings should also be declared when appropriate.

Agenda Item 3: Openness of Committee Proceedings - revisited SACN/01/02A

6. The Chair confirmed that the Committee have agreed to publish dates of meetings, the agenda and papers in advance; that the minutes of each meeting and annual report will be made public; that one open meeting will be held annually; and that through these measures the workings of the Committee will be made public.
7. The Committee was advised of the re-wording of paragraph 5 of the Openness of Committee Proceedings document, which was considered at the previous meeting. **Committee Members agreed points 1 to 7.**

Agenda Item 4: Risk analysis; SACN's approach to Risk Assessment in Nutrition SACN/01/06

8. The Committee was asked to consider methods of risk assessment presented in the annexes to SACN/01/06.
9. The Chair confirmed that a structured approach was needed and the Committee would use the structure to guide them to ensure they cover the important issues and also that the process be open and available to the general public.
10. Members said that there are few good animal models with relevance to humans. Generally in nutrition there is a great reliance on epidemiology. Members agreed that, depending on the area of nutrition under consideration, it was important to have agreed measures, endpoints and characteristics that they can use in order to assess risk. The Committee agreed that they needed to understand and state clearly the principles of risk assessment in nutrition.
11. Members suggested that a 'check list' approach would be a way forward to ensure that evidence from a range of different studies (i.e. epidemiological, animal, genetic, physiological, clinical) is considered in a systematic manner.
12. The Chair proposed that a subgroup be organised by the Secretariat. The subgroup should meet at least once to discuss the most appropriate format for risk assessment for use by the Committee and report to the Committee in due course. The process can then be refined and developed to the Committee's satisfaction in order to meet requirements for a range of circumstances. **A checklist would be drafted by the Secretariat in consultation with experts from the Committee.**
13. Committee Members felt that it was important to ensure that when communicating the basis of risk assessment that it be put into clear and simple terms to ensure that it is understood by the layperson. The processes should be spelt out in a step by step manner so that when the issues are made public, consumers will be in a better position to make choices based on the information available.
14. Members noted that if conclusions could not be reached on particular topics due to a lack of evidence, the Committee could make a recommendation that further evidence or research is needed. It would be up to the sponsor departments to respond to such suggestions.
15. **The Committee agreed to the setting up of a subgroup, to be led by Professor John Cummings and to draft a checklist for the Committee to consider.**

Agenda Item 5: Infant and Child Nutrition: Ad hoc Group's advice on Breastfeeding SACN/01/07

16. The Committee were reminded that at the last meeting of SACN, it was asked to comment on the recommendation by the Ad hoc Expert Group on Child and Maternal Nutrition on the optimal duration of breastfeeding. The Ad hoc Group was convened in December 2000, under the Chairmanship of Professor Alan Jackson in the light of the World Health Organisation (WHO) activity on this issue. The Ad hoc Group included members of the former Committee on Medical Aspects of Food Policy (COMA) panel on Child and Maternal Nutrition. SACN members requested at the previous meeting to see the minutes of the Ad hoc Group meeting and the papers on the issue to facilitate discussion and comment.
17. Gill Fine declared an interest (as her employer, Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd, produce own label infant food) and asked whether she should leave the meeting. The Chair confirmed that she could stay.
18. The Committee were reminded of the recommendation of the Ad hoc Group:

"That there is sufficient scientific evidence that exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months is nutritionally adequate".

"However the group noted that early introduction of complementary foods is normal practice in the UK and that mothers do this for many valid personal, social and economic reasons. They therefore recommended that there should be some flexibility in the advice, but that any complementary feeding should not be introduced before the end of 4 months (17 weeks)".

19. It was highlighted to Members that, at the World Health Assembly in May 2001, a WHO resolution on Infant and Child Nutrition was adopted, which the UK supported:

" to strengthen activities and develop new approaches to protect, promote and support exclusive breastfeeding for six months as a public health recommendation, taking into account the findings of the WHO expert consultation on optimal duration of exclusive breastfeeding, and to provide safe and appropriate complementary foods, with continued breastfeeding for up to two years of age or beyond, emphasising channels of social dissemination of these concepts in order to lead communities to adhere to these practices."

20. Committee members were informed that the WHO resolution was based on a systematic review by an expert committee. As this review has not yet been published, members are not able to assess the evidence on which the WHO based its recommendations. The WHO expert committee made the following recommendation:

"The expert committee recommend exclusive breastfeeding for 6 months with the introduction of complementary foods and continued breastfeeding thereafter. This recommendation applies to populations. The expert committee recognise that some mothers will be unable to, or choose not to, follow this recommendation; they should be supported to optimise their infants' nutrition."

21. The Committee was reminded that the UK's *Ad Hoc* Group recommendation refers to the introduction of solid foods to healthy, breastfed infants. The considerations of low birth weight infants, for example, would need to be met under a different set of recommendations.
22. An important consideration in the UK is that only 27% of women breastfeed for more than 4 months of age and many women introduce complementary foods (earlier than 4 months). The WHO resolution takes into account the fact that some mothers may not be able to breastfeed exclusively for 6 months.
23. The Committee were reminded that the *Ad hoc* Group had clarified its advice on the age of introduction of complementary foods by translating the number of months into weeks (17).
24. The Committee considered:
- the relevance of the current growth charts, which are predominantly based on the growth of formula fed infants, although the WHO are currently developing new charts based on breastfed infants;
 - that breastfed infants regulate their intake and the introduction of complementary foods reduces the amount of breast milk consumed;
 - the types of analysis that could be carried out to test whether (i) exclusive breast feeding to 6 months of age is nutritionally adequate and (ii) the introduction of complementary foods at the end of 4 months does not result in harm.

The Committee recognised that while morbidity data can be used to compare the effects of the early and late introduction of complementary foods, it would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to obtain.

25. The Committee was informed that DH was responsible for policy in this area and for communicating messages on breastfeeding.
26. The Committee was asked to confirm whether they accept the recommendation of the *Ad hoc* Group and to endorse it. ***The Committee Members confirmed acceptance and endorsed the recommendation made by the Ad hoc Group (paragraph 18).***

Agenda Item 6: Infant and Child Nutrition: *Infant and Child Nutrition issues* : SACN/01/08

27. The Committee was asked to consider the application by Cow & Gate/Nutricia to include the infant formula *Omneo Comfort 1* in the Welfare Food Scheme.
28. The Committee expressed concern over several points relating to the product:
 - i. that data provided on interim growth for infants fed the product under discussion was insufficient and did not meet COMA guidelines. Members were provided with a translated abstract of a study printed in German but the translated abstract did not provide enough detail about the study design.
 - ii. there were limited details on the carbohydrate content, particularly for oligosaccharides.
 - iii. overall there were insufficient data to suggest any benefit of the product over the existing range included in the Welfare Food Scheme.
29. ***The Committee Members agreed that as yet there was insufficient scientific evidence to justify the product's suitability for inclusion in the Welfare Food Scheme.***

Agenda Item 7: Working Group on Iron SACN/01/09

30. The Committee was reminded that at the previous meeting they had agreed that there was a need for a working group on iron and that nominations for members of the working group should go to the Secretariat.
31. The Chair nominated Professor Aggett to Chair the working group on iron and this was approved by other members of the Committee. The Committee agreed that the working group would have 8-10 members and that the Vice Chair would also be a member of SACN.
32. ***The Committee agreed that the Secretariat, in consultation with Chair of the Working Group on Iron, would draw up a list of nominations for the Working Group to discuss at the next meeting of SACN.***

Agenda Item 8: Salt Summary – Evidence Since 1994 SACN/01/10

33. The Committee was informed at the last meeting that requests had been made by the FSA and supported by the Chief Medical Officer (CMO) Wales for SACN to review the evidence base supporting a reduction in the population intake of salt and whether it has altered since the 1994 COMA report *Nutritional Aspects of Cardiovascular Disease*.
34. A summary paper of evidence published since 1994 on adults and available data on children was submitted to the Committee. However, the Chair advised that it was not appropriate for the Committee to consider evidence in detail on salt (sodium chloride) at this meeting. ***The Committee agreed that if there is any group which feels that the COMA recommendations on reducing salt intake need to be revisited, the Committee are prepared to consider the evidence.***
35. The Chair suggested that a subgroup be set up to look at any evidence that may be presented to SACN and asked for four volunteers. ***The Committee agreed that a subgroup on salt should be set up. The Secretariat will formally write to SACN Members asking for four volunteers.***
36. Gill Fine of Sainsbury's Supermarkets Ltd declared a conflict of interest on this issue.
37. ***The Chair asked that the FSA be responsible for collating information submitted by interested parties, for the subgroup to assess, and in turn present it to SACN for an opinion.***

AOB

38. The Committee was asked to consider whether a separate panel should be set up that exclusively considers maternal and infant nutrition. The Committee was advised that the COMA subgroup on Maternal and Infant Nutrition carried out a considerable body of work regarding policy and regulatory issues, regularly produced reports and met at least 6-7 times in the last year of its existence. The Committee agreed that there was a need for regular advice on this issue.
39. The Committee confirmed their agreement that there was a benefit to SACN to have subgroups and working groups where appropriate. ***The Secretariat would put proposals to the next Committee meeting, taking account of the proposed subgroup on the Influence of Early Nutrition on Development of Disease in Later Life.***
40. It was raised whether a separate group should be set up to address issues around social deprivation or whether it could be part of another group e.g. maternal and infant nutrition. However, other Members pointed out that nutritional problems as a result of social deprivation do not only occur in mothers and infants and that virtually all topics on the Committee's work programme will at some point address issues around social deprivation.
41. The Committee was reminded that at the previous meeting they were provided with an update of policy areas that both the DH and FSA were currently undertaking. The Committee agreed that they would like

the Secretariat to provide them with an update of DH and FSA policy areas for each future SACN meeting. The update will include issues from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

42. The Committee was informed that they will be given all papers for future meetings at least two weeks in advance, to allow them sufficient time to read.

Before closing the meeting the Chair informed the Committee that Professor Prakash Shetty has resigned from the Committee due to his appointment as Head of Nutrition at the FAO.