

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Paper for discussion:

Minutes of 5th Meeting

Agenda Item 1

Please see attached minutes for approval.

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

5th MEETING
20 June 2002, The Royal College of Physicians, Regent's Park, London

DRAFT MINUTES

Chairman	Professor Alan Jackson
Members	Professor Peter Aggett Professor Annie Anderson Professor Sheila Bingham Professor John Cummings Miss Gill Fine Dr Tim 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	Mr Tom Murray (FSA) Ms Danila Armstrong (DH) Dr Maureen Howell (Welsh Assembly) Dr Martin Donaghy (Scottish Health Executive)
Secretariat	Dr Lisa Jackson (FSA) Dr Alison Tedstone (FSA) Dr Peter Sanderson (FSA) Dr Sheela Reddy (DH) Dr Adrienne Cullum (DH)
Others Attending	Dr David Gott (FSA) Mrs Sue Hattersely (FSA)

Chair's Introduction

1. The Chair welcomed Members to the fifth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN).

2. The Chair also welcomed members of the public to SACN's first open meeting. The Committee would carry out its business as usual. There would be an opportunity for questions at the end of the meeting and these would be recorded as an annex to the minutes. The meeting was being taped to aid the writing of the minutes.
3. The Chair asked Committee Members for items to add to the agenda under Any Other Business.

Apologies for absence

4. Apologies for absence were received from Dr Elizabeth Mitchell and Ms Imogen Sharp (represented by Ms Danila Armstrong). The Chair welcomed Mrs Maureen Howell, the new Assessor for the Welsh Assembly.

Agenda Item 1: Minutes of last meeting (27/3/01) SACN /02/min 01

5. Members were invited to comment on the minutes of the previous meeting.
6. It was agreed that paragraph 44 should read “..on whether the late introduction of gluten defers the presentation of coeliac disease...” as it has not been clearly established whether late introduction prevents or delays the disease.
7. It was agreed that the last line of paragraph 10 should be deleted as details of a scoring system had already appeared as an appendix.
8. Members agreed the minutes.

Matters arising

9. In relation to paragraph 14, the Secretariat plan to circulate a flow chart showing the links between SACN and other advisory committees, which is currently being developed by the FSA Consumer Unit and DH.
10. In relation to paragraph 24, the Salt Sub-group did not consider the issue of salt/sodium labelling to be within its remit. The Secretariat had forwarded SACN's comments on the Food Advisory Committee (FAC) report and the FSA's Action Plan on Labelling to the FSA Labelling Division.
11. As requested at the previous meeting, the Scottish Executive provided Members with an update on the evaluation of food initiatives. The Scottish Health Survey monitors trends in eating behaviours and includes physiological measures. On-going community diet projects also include an evaluation component. While the current

priority is to implement the Action Plan, the Executive recognises that further work is required on monitoring and evaluation (particularly for dietary intakes) and is considering how this can be achieved.

12. Members had previously requested clarification of the sampling methods for the Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey. Members were informed that the Survey will not over or under sample any one population group. If one population group, such as the elderly, are more likely to have a low income, they are more likely to be included in the survey.
13. The Secretariat agreed to circulate, by email, the MRC *Review of Autism Research, Epidemiology and Causes*. As SACN may be asked to re-consider this issue in the future, it was agreed that Members with relevant expertise should receive a hard copy of the report to inform further discussion on this issue. The matter could be considered at the next Committee meeting.

Action: Secretariat

14. Members were informed that the recruitment process for Members of the proposed Working Group on Child and Maternal Nutrition was still under consideration and would be discussed at the next meeting.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda Item 2: Letter from Professor Annie Anderson on FAC Food Labelling Report and reply from Rosemary Hignett, Food Labelling and Standards, FSA SACN/02/09

15. Members noted the letter from Professor Anderson on the Food Advisory Committee (FAC) Food Labelling Report and the reply from the FSA.

Agenda Item 3: Physical Activity in Routine General Practice SACN/02/10

16. The Secretariat introduced the paper, which Members had requested at the previous meeting.
17. The Secretariat agreed to provide Members with clarification of the methods to validate the proposed shortened EPIC questionnaire.

Action: Secretariat

18. Members expressed concerns on the purpose, usage and benefits of the questionnaire, in particular, whether it will provide useful and robust data. The questionnaire is a one minute version of a validated EPIC questionnaire and members questioned how or whether this new version had been validated. The Chair commented that since the

project is on-going, it would be more appropriate for Members to consider the work when the project was completed and report available.

Action: Secretariat

**Agenda Item 4: Briefing on the Advisory Committee on Research (ACR)
SACN/02/11**

19. Members had previously requested more information about the ACR. Members were invited to comment on the paper.
20. Members requested clarification of how priorities were established. Members were informed that the FSA Board established objectives and strategic priorities for a 3-5 year period. The ACR assesses the Agency's overall research programme in terms of these objectives. It was noted that the ACR is an overarching committee that does not manage individual research programmes. The FSA works in co-operation with the Health Departments and it is envisaged that ACR papers of relevance will also be circulated to them.
21. Members noted that the Chair of the ACR was an authority in nutrition but queried whether the membership included sufficient specialist nutrition expertise to contribute to discussions on specific aspects of nutrition research. Members also queried whether there was any opportunity for cross-representation with SACN. Members were informed that the ACR did not depend solely on the expertise of its Members and had close links with many other committees. The wide range of issues that the Committee had to address meant that it was not practical for all FSA committees to have cross-representation.
22. The Chair highlighted the importance of there being close links between SACN and the ACR. If cross-representation was not possible, SACN needed to be clear on how decision making would be handled in particular instances. Members supported this view due to the importance of nutrition to the work of the FSA.
23. It was agreed that the views of SACN on specific issues could be fed back to the ACR where appropriate. SACN can make research recommendations to the FSA and Health Departments.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda Item 5: A Framework for Evaluation of Evidence that Relates Food and Nutrients to Health SACN/02/02A

24. The Secretariat introduced the paper, which had been further modified due to comments made at the previous meeting.

25. The place of Government surveys in the evidence was queried. Members were informed that published data – including routine statistics - could be included in the evidence base and it was pointed out that the Framework (section C, bullet 7) recognised the use of such data.
26. Members agreed to adopt the Framework as a working document and to review it following practical testing in 1 year.

Agenda Item 6: Advice to FSA: on the benefits of oily fish and fish oil consumption from SACN SACN/02/12

27. Members were informed that an *Ad Hoc* group, chaired by Professor Jackson and consisting of Professor Christine Williams, Professor Tom Sanders (Kings College, London) and Professor Philip Calder (University of Southampton), had produced this paper following their participation in a telephone conference in May 2002. The *Ad Hoc* Group were asked to consider the evidence on the association between fish/fish oil consumption and the primary and secondary prevention of cardiovascular disease, published since 1994, when COMA last assessed the topic. The Group were also asked to consider any non-cardiac benefits of fish/fish oil consumption.
28. Professor Williams summarised the discussions of the *Ad Hoc* Group. The long term follow-up of large, prospective population studies, published since 1994, show a strong dose response effect of fish consumption on reduced risk of CHD. An RCT in a healthy population is still required to rule out possible confounding factors. Trials on the secondary prevention of CHD show a substantial reduction in risk with fish/fish oil consumption. The dose of n-3 PUFA required for this effect was relatively low – about 1g/d. The mechanism for these associations remains unclear. The *Ad Hoc* Group did not assess non-cardiac associations in detail, but there is evidence that increased consumption may reduce the symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. The *Ad Hoc* Group therefore concluded that “the scientific evidence that increased fish /fish oil consumption would decrease the incidence of CHD in the UK population is stronger now than in 1994”.
29. It was noted that the precise nature of the association between fish consumption and birthweight was not clear and the views expressed on associations between consumption and cognitive function in infants did not reflect the conclusions of the original papers cited. A Cochrane review on omega-3 fatty acids in term infants did not find any short or long term benefits on development.
30. It was noted that the research on American nurses referenced in the paper by the *Ad Hoc* group (SACN/02/12) was a prospective observational study and not a trial.
31. Dr Tim Key, declared an interest as a vegetarian, and commented that it would have been useful if the paper had also addressed options for vegetarians, who were unable

to meet the COMA recommendations for fish consumption. Studies suggest that vegetarians have low mortality rates and there is insufficient evidence on whether the health of vegetarians would be improved if they consumed oily fish. The Chair noted that, while clarification was useful, this issue was not key to the assessment of the health benefits of fish/fish oil.

32. Members also wanted to know the context for updating the evidence. The Committee was informed that there were on-going concerns about the contamination of fish/ fish oils and the FSA was keen that consumers were provided with balanced advice on benefits and risks. The FSA had recently issued interim guidance on the consumption of marlin, swordfish and shark due to high levels of mercury found in these fish. Members noted that it was particularly important to clarify the current COMA guidance for pregnant women due to these concerns.
33. It was noted that the Ad Hoc Group's advice was provided to COT before SACN had discussed and approved the paper. SACN's advice was required urgently to inform risk assessment on mercury in fish and dioxins in fish oil supplements by the Committee on Toxicity (COT) at their meeting on the 18 June 2002. Members were reminded that if SACN had to respond urgently to requests for advice within a short time period, the issue would be brought to the full Committee's attention at the next meeting. This is consistent with the workings of other committees.
34. It was queried what the next steps would be in terms of dietary recommendations, following the conclusions of the paper. The Chair reminded Members that the *Ad Hoc* Group had been asked to assess whether there had been a change in the weight of the evidence since 1994. If SACN thought a fuller, more formal exploration of the evidence was required, and dietary recommendations re-assessed, it would be necessary to do this as a separate activity in the work programme.
35. The Committee supported the conclusions of the paper in the context of the question asked. The Chair thanked the *Ad Hoc* Group for their work.

Action: Secretariat

Agenda Item 7: Salt Sub-group update and minutes of meeting 18/4/02 SACN/02/13

36. The Chair introduced the paper. The Committee could expect a draft report at the next meeting and a final report by the end of the year. Members were invited to comment on the paper.
37. In response to a query, Members were informed that the prevalence and distribution of salt sensitivity remained unclear due to the lack of a standard definition.

Agenda Item 8: Working Group on Iron update SACN/02/14

38. Professor Aggett, Chair of the Working Group, introduced this paper and invited Members to comment. He clarified that the draft chapter headings were intended to be broad, and issues, such as dietary sources of iron and iron overload, would be addressed. The possible adverse effects of iron on chronic disease had been mistakenly omitted from the list of draft chapter headings.
39. Professor Aggett agreed to ask the Working Group whether SACN would be able to view the first draft of their report. The next meeting of the Working Group is planned for 24 July 2002.

Agenda Item 11: Government update on nutrition related activities: The Scottish Executive Health Department SACN/02/22

40. Dr Martin Donaghy thanked Members for considering this agenda item earlier than planned. Dr Donaghy introduced the paper, highlighting that some areas of work had already been discussed in Matters Arising. Members were invited to comment.
41. In response to a question on whether the Action Plan targets low income groups, Dr Donaghy noted that communities affected by adverse circumstances are one of a number of key target groups. In response to a query by Gill Fine, who declared an interest, he also clarified that action on “health enhancing foods” was primarily aimed at fat reduction, and that links with the Joint Health Claims Initiative would be welcome.
42. Members were informed that the Berry Project in Scotland is part of attempts to increase fruit consumption, particularly among children and young adults. This initiative draws on effective action to increase berry consumption in Finland. Dr Donaghy also clarified the “whole school” approach, which includes school meals, the uptake of which is affected by a broad range of issues, including stigma and the school environment.
43. It was noted that the increase in incidence and duration of breastfeeding in Scotland, as outlined in the *Infant Feeding Survey 2000*, may have been due to the ability to target interventions in Scotland as a result of good local data collection on breastfeeding. However, it was noted that the increase is against a background of low baseline levels in Scotland compared to England and Wales.
44. Members discussed the issue of fortification of alcoholic drinks with thiamine to prevent some of the effects of alcohol abuse. Concerns included the practical problems of fortifying imported drinks, the ability of Scotland to take a unilateral decision on the issue, labelling and legal issues, and the cost effectiveness of this action. The Expert Group on Vitamins and Minerals (EVM) would be looking at recommendations on safe upper levels of a range of vitamins and minerals including

thiamine. Members were informed that the EVM were finalising their draft report which was subject to consultation in Autumn 2002 and can be shared with SACN. Dr Donaghy stated that the issue of thiamine fortification may be forwarded to SACN for more detailed consideration. SACN members noted that the question of fortification of beer with thiamine has been an issue for ongoing discussion in Australia for some years, and it may be possible to draw some lessons from this experience.

45. Members were informed that an audit of the nutritional status of older people receiving care in Scotland suggested that this group might benefit from supplements of vitamin D. The Executive were assessing the practicalities and costs of this action. The remit of the audit group did not include an assessment of the needs of other population groups, but it was recognised that other groups may also have low intakes of vitamin D and/or other micronutrients.

Agenda item 9: Advisory Committee on Novel Foods and Processes (ACNFP) opinion on DHA GoldTM SACN/02/15

46. The Chair noted that this paper was tabled for information. The ACNFP Secretariat, was asked to outline the process within the EC for clearing novel foods or ingredients and the points in the process where advice may be sought from committees such as SACN. An application for clearance must be made to one Member State. The application for DH GoldTM was made to the UK. The UK has 90 days to give an initial opinion, that is then passed to other member states for comment. Where an application is made to another EC country, the UK has only 60 days to comment on the initial opinion. The Chair invited Members to comment.
47. It was noted that ingredients similar to DH GoldTM have previously been approved by ACNFP.
48. Members expressed a number of concerns about the information provided, in particular, the assumptions that the physiological effects of DHA will be similar to those of fish oils, on which considerable experimental information is available. Data available since 1999 have suggested different physiological effects of EPA and DHA; fish oils contain both EPA and DHA, and it cannot be assumed that the effects of a supplement of DHA alone will be similar to the effects of fish oil containing both these fatty acids. Members also discussed the lack of exposure assessment in children, the lack of evidence on the impact of processing on the oil, and the small sample size and age range of study participants. Members also highlighted the importance of adequately labelling this product. There were concerns that the onus would be placed on consumers to make sense of complex issues relating to the product.
49. The ACNFP Secretary agreed to inform the ACNFP of SACN's comments. The Secretary highlighted that the company did not intend to fortify foods targeted at children, and planned to introduce the product as a capsule in the first instance and possibly incorporating into foods at a later stage. Other Members States now have the

opportunity to provide views on the draft decision and any final decision will be taken at the Standing Committee; SACN's comments about labelling requirements could be considered at this stage.

50. The Committee stated that it was important to consider the process by which nutritional assessments of novel foods is made and whether ACNFP had access to appropriate specialist expertise. This could either be through its own membership or by cross-referencing to SACN where issues of nutritional safety were concerned.
51. The ACNFP Secretary explained that the membership of ACNFP included a range of expertise, including nutrition. Where necessary, ACNFP could seek more specialist advice from other expert committees such as SACN. The balance of representation on ACNFP, like all expert committees, is reviewed at each appointment round. There were also links between the two committees at Secretariat level, which allows identification of applications where specialist advice was likely to be needed.
52. The ACNFP Secretary informed Members that short deadlines can sometimes constrain the ability of ACNFP to cross-refer formally an application to other committees when it received an initial opinion from another Member State. However, if there was not time to resolve any potential issues then the UK would object to the application, which would result in it being referred to the Scientific Committee for Food for evaluation.

Agenda item 10: The role of dietary lipids in the development of cardiovascular disease. FSA Nutrition Research Programme workshops SACN/02/16

53. The Secretariat introduced the paper. SACN had requested more information about the workshops at the previous meeting. Members were invited to comment.
54. Members welcomed clarification on the consensus reached at the workshops, particularly for the optimal intake of monounsaturated fat, on which concerns were raised at the previous meeting.
55. Members discussed a number of issues relating to this paper, including:
 - the possibility that although no consistent effects on CVD risk factors were observed with alpha-linolenic acid (ALNA) supplementation this did not preclude an effect on clinical end points, e.g. 1g/d EPA and DHA has no effect on cardiovascular risk factors yet very significantly reduces the reoccurrence of CHD . This was in accord with the workshop recommendations which stated that although there was no reason to look further at existing CHD risk factors in relation to ALNA supplementation, a randomized clinical trial to investigate the effect of ALNA supplementation on the reoccurrence of coronary heart disease was required.
 - the observation that progress towards recommended intakes of dietary fat cannot be fully assessed until publication of the forthcoming National Diet and Nutrition Survey of British Adults.

- the suggestion that an improved database of the fatty acid content of the British diet would aid large epidemiological studies and clinical trials.
- the need for experiments to determine the effect of replacing saturated fat by complex carbohydrate (in combination with or as an alternative to monounsaturated fat).

56. The status of the carbohydrate programme was raised. Members were informed that the research programme had been completed and has been reviewed by Professor David Southgate. Professor Cummings will be given an opportunity for comment. FSA will take this forward in the near future.

Agenda item 11 Government update on nutrition related activities

Food Standards Agency SACN /02/17

57. Mr Tom Murray introduced this paper and Members were invited to comment.

58. In response to questions, Members were informed that the *Catering for Health* pack has been successfully launched and that evaluation of the pack would take place when more progress had been made on its uptake.

Food Standards Agency – Review of Antioxidants in Foods Research Programme SACN /02/18

59. This paper was introduced by the Secretariat and Members were invited to comment.

60. Members welcomed this review and strongly supported the use of workshops in the research programme review process, highlighting that by bringing together expertise, raising standards, ensuring quality, providing an opportunity for reflection and establishing clear consensus, it made a considerable contribution to the advancement of the science.

61. Members sought clarification on the role of SACN in the development and focus of the research programmes, the prioritisation of research spend and clarification of how current programmes might be progressed.

62. The FSA agreed to provide members with an outline of the Agency's research priorities and the balance of the spend on research. It was suggested that this matter be discussed in detail in 2003. It was highlighted that there are no plans for FSA research programmes to be altered radically or end suddenly.

Action: Secretariat

Food Standards Agency - Folic Acid SACN /02/19

63. The FSA introduced this paper, highlighting that following the FSA Board decision on the fortification of wheat flour with folic acid at their meeting in May, formal advice to the Health Ministers will be posted on the Agency website within 2 weeks of this meeting. The decision of Ministers will be based on the COMA conclusions, the responses to the Consultation carried out in 2000, and the advice from the FSA and the Chief Medical Officers. If Ministers decided to fortify flour with folic acid, it would probably take 12 months to implement to allow for consultation and legal requirements.
64. Members' discussion included the evidence for benefit and risk among older adults, the importance (and difficulty) of maintaining consumer choice, the practicalities of fortifying different flour types, and the percentage of flour and flour products which are imported into the UK. Members also raised concerns about the lack of structured debate on wider issues around population intakes of folate and B12. Members were surprised that the paper did not give more attention to associations between folate and chronic disease. It was also highlighted that while folate may delay the diagnosis of B12 deficiency, the manifestation of B12 deficiency in neurological symptoms is ill defined and inconsistent.
65. The Chair highlighted that this discussion raised the issue of how scientific advice is used in risk management and policy development. Concern about neural tube defects was the original basis for the consideration of population folate status. However, the balance of benefit and risk for the population as a whole is relevant when fortification is considered. Folate deficiency is common in the same subgroup of the population in which B12 deficiency may be masked, namely older people. The debate emphasises the importance of using broad nutritional principles which complement more narrowly defined clinical considerations in the development of public health policy.

Department of Health and Infant Feeding Survey 2000 SACN /02/20

66. DH introduced the update on the Department's activities. The findings of the *Infant Feeding Survey 2000* were also summarised. Members were invited to comment.
67. In response to queries, Ms Armstrong highlighted that the results of the evaluation of the 5-a-day Community Pilot Projects - which assessed fruit and vegetable intake, awareness and knowledge - will shortly be available on the DH website.
68. It was agreed that Members should be provided with details of website addresses to obtain more information about the research programme on diet and obesity, and on the Healthy School Standards.

Action: Secretariat

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (NI) SACN /02/21

69. This paper was tabled for information.

The National Assembly for Wales

70. Mrs Maureen Howell gave an oral update on activities in Wales. Nutrition strategy for Wales had been published and it has been placed on the FSA website.

AOB

71. Members requested a chart showing the expertise covered by the members of other, relevant, committees.

72. Members were alerted to the publication of the SACN Annual Report and advised to forward any comments on the report to the Secretariat.

73. Members were informed that the Committee's next meeting has been pencilled in for the 3 October 2002 but that the Secretariat will also search for a date towards the end of October and finalise the meeting date by post.

Action: Secretariat

74. The Chair informed the committee that this was the last meeting for Dr Lisa Jackson and thanked her for her contribution to the setting up and to the work of the Committee.