

Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition

Paper for information: DH Update on Nutrition Initiatives

Agenda item: 6

Please see attached paper for information.

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DH Update on Nutrition Initiatives

OBESITY

- The National Institute on Clinical Excellence (**NICE**) has provided guidance on the surgical treatment for morbid obesity. This is further to the guidance on the use of the anti-obesity drugs orlistat and sibutramine, treatment with which should be supported by advice, support and counselling on diet, physical activity and behavioural strategies.
- With support from DH, the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and National Obesity Forum, have produced guidance on weight management in children and adolescents in primary care. Further information can be obtained from www.rcpch.ac.uk.

NUTRITION FORUM

- The next meeting of the **Nutrition Forum** is to be held on the 7th November 2002. Papers to discuss include: local strategies to include diet related change; Government nutrition activities in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; and Health claims and progress with the Joint Health Claims Initiative. More information about the Forum, including papers and notes from previous meetings can be found at: <http://www.doh.gov.uk/nutritionforum/>

FOOD AND FARMING

- The Policy Commission on the Future of Farming and Food (the Curry Report) reported to Government in January. The report recognised the potential impact of the food and farming industries upon the health of the population and spoke of reconnecting the nutritional context into how we think about food and farming. The Government's Sustainable Farming and Food Strategy will be published later this Autumn and will build upon the broad themes identified by the Policy Commission report.

WHO RESOLUTION ON DIET, PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTH

- The Resolution on diet, physical activity and health was passed at the World Health Assembly meeting in May this year. The Resolution requests that the Director General develop a global strategy on diet, physical activity and health within the framework of the renewed WHO strategy for the prevention and control of non communicable diseases and urges member states to collaborate with WHO in developing such a strategy. The Resolution calls on all Member States to draw up strategies for diet, physical activity and health involving all sectors. The UK fully supports this approach.

WHO GLOBAL BURDEN OF DISEASE

- The Department of Health has funded a piece of work undertaken by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to assess the global burden of disease attributable to lack of fruit and vegetable consumption and to explore the feasibility of fruit and vegetable consumption being included as a risk factor in the next version of the WHO report on the Global Burden of Disease, due for publication in 2002. A report of this work has been received by the Department and is expected to be included in the World Health Report 2002 to be published by the end of this year.

INTERCOLLEGIATE COURSE IN HUMAN NUTRITION

- The Department of Health has funded £10,000 towards the Royal College of Pathologists (RCPATH) Intercollegiate Course on Human Nutrition. The course developed by the College's Intercollegiate Group on Nutrition aims to provide a foundation in the principles of human nutrition in a way which would underpin clinical activity in all specialities and has been actively promoted to General Practitioners and hospital clinicians. The course is delivered three times a year in Southampton, Nottingham and Scotland.

FIVE A DAY PROGRAMME

An update of the communications strand of the Five a day programme and plans for its further development are outlined.

Introduction

1. The Government has set out a framework with a strong focus on prevention of ill health and tackling health inequalities in England, as identified in the *NHS Plan* (Department of Health, 2000), the *NHS Cancer Plan* (Department of Health, 2000), and the *National Service Framework for Coronary Heart Disease* (Department of Health, 2000).

2. Nutrition activities in the Department are predominantly based on commitments outlined in the *NHS Plan* and reflect current dietary recommendations, (see **SACN/02/ 26**). By 2004, action will include:
 - a new National School Fruit Scheme
 - a five-a-day programme to increase fruit and vegetable consumption
 - work with industry - producers as well as retailers - to increase provision and access to fruit and vegetables with local initiatives, where necessary, to establish local food co-operatives
 - initiatives with the food industry - including manufacturers and caterers – to improve the overall balance of the diet by reducing salt, fat and sugar in food, working with the FSA
 - a reform of the welfare foods programme to use the resources more effectively to ensure children in poverty have access to a healthy diet, and increased support for breast feeding and parenting
 - a hospital nutrition policy to improve outcome of care for patients. This will also reduce dependency on intravenous feeding regimes.
 - local action to tackle obesity and physical inactivity, informed by advice from the new HDA

Overview of the Five A Day programme

3. A key feature of the prevention strategies to reduce early deaths from cancer and coronary heart disease, and reduce health inequalities, is action to improve access to, and increase consumption of, fruit and vegetables. The Five-a-day programme offers targeted action to achieve these goals, and includes five strands:

- **National School Fruit Scheme** - entitles every child aged 4-6 (around 2.5 million children) to a free piece of fruit each school day, by 2004. The Scheme has already been piloted, and expansion is taking place on a region by region basis, supported by £42m from the New Opportunities Fund. The first whole-region to benefit from the scheme was West Midlands. From Autumn term 2002, children in the London region will begin to receive fruit each school day. This will bring the total number of children entitled to fruit to around 600,000 and will involve around 4,000 schools.
- **Five-a-day community initiatives** - 5 pilot community initiatives targeted over 1 million people, in disadvantaged areas, with a range of evidence-based interventions to improve people's access to, and awareness of, fruit and vegetables, to make it easier for them to eat more. The New Opportunities Fund has made £10m available to support the establishment of 66 new initiatives, led by Primary Care Trusts. Guidance on delivering evidence-based interventions has been developed and is informed by lessons from five pilot initiatives.
- **Work with food industry** to improve access to fruit and vegetables. Industry has been involved in a number of events to help shape the development of the programme.
- **Evaluation and monitoring** - a framework is being developed, to assess the impact of the Five-a-day programme on consumption, attitudes and awareness. As part of the evaluation of the Five a day pilot projects, a validated tool has been developed to aid the assessment of fruit and vegetable consumption at a local level. The Department has also funded the development of validated tools to assess the impact of the National School Fruit Scheme on children's diets. The Health Survey for England aids the monitoring of population trends in BMI, physical activity and fruit and vegetable consumption.
- **A communications programme** – see below.
Further information, reports and updates are available from www.doh.gov.uk/fiveaday

Communications Programme

4. The Five-a-day communications programme will aim to increase consumption and awareness of the health benefits of fruit and vegetables, particularly targeting those groups with the lowest intakes. In particular, the programme will provide clear and consistent messages about five-a-day including the amount that

constitutes a portion and the benefits of eating at least five portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables a day. A Five-a-day logo has been developed as part of the communications programme, to help people recognise the five-a-day message and introduce consistency in the message in all settings. The logo was developed following qualitative research commissioned by the Department of Health. This research aimed to:

- confirm what influences fruit and vegetable consumption in low-income groups.
 - establish awareness and understanding of the five-a-day message.
 - establish what motivates people to eat fruit and vegetables (both the internal and external motivators).
 - establish the best way to promote five-a-day.
5. A set of 16 focus groups were held. Participants were predominantly from social groups C2, D and E and included people from different ethnic groups, males and females (single and co-habiting) and children (below and above 12 years of age). The results suggested that people:
- think they are already eating enough fruit and vegetables.
 - have difficulty with the notion of portions, in terms of size and numbers.
 - think vegetables referred to as ‘raw’ are ‘dirty’ and inconvenient.
 - people need reassurance about choosing, cooking and eating vegetables.
 - associate fruit with looking healthy and being in good shape, particularly women.
 - would consider eating fruit as a snack or on its own, but are more likely to eat vegetable as part of a “complete” meal.
 - look for accessible, quick, easy, convenient foods but are not necessarily aware that canned or frozen vegetables and fruit count towards five-a-day.

“What Counts” towards Five a Day

6. The focus groups highlighted the need to develop clear and consistent messages for consumers on what counts towards Five a day, and what constitutes a portion. To aid this work, DH established a *What Counts* stakeholders group in February 2002. Most of the invited members have nutrition expertise and represent the full range of views on this matter. DH also commissioned Leatherhead Research Association to carry out an audit of fresh, prepared and processed fruit and

vegetable products in order to estimate appropriate portion sizes based on weights and easy measures such as tablespoons, handfuls and bowls (as appropriate). The work carried out by Leatherhead has been reviewed by the FSA, the Health Development Agency and the EPIC research team in Cambridge.

7. Details of “what counts” towards five-a-day are being finalised following the results of the Leatherhead research and in consultation with the *What Counts* stakeholders group. The key points are:
 - The work has confirmed the current advice but identified the need to clarify and update the guidance.
 - The advice is to eat at least 5 portions of a variety of fruit and vegetables each day.
 - Fresh, frozen, chilled, canned and dried fruit and vegetables count.
 - It confirmed that a portion of fruit or vegetables is around 80g, in line with current guidance.
 - The tomato puree content of a product has a considerable impact on the portion estimates for a product (if based on its reconstituted weight). As a result, it may be necessary to limit the amount of puree contributing to five-a-day, in line with the advice on juices, baked beans and pulses in order to ensure the inclusion of a variety of fruit and vegetables in the diet.

8. It is proposed that the information on “what counts” will be included in resources produced by DH for health professionals. The guidance on what counts and portion size could also form the basis for materials produced by others.

Logo development

9. The Five a day logo and message were developed in consultation with the food industry, health education and consumer organisations and other government departments. A further series of focus groups to test consumer reaction to the Five-a-day logo were carried out. The feedback from these groups included:
 - the programme and its logo should not be seen to sanction foods or products that participants considered as “bad foods”.
 - participants were concerned that the logo may be used on foods which were “high” in fat, sugar or salt.

- participants hoped that the logo would be a ‘mark’ of value and not a ubiquitous mark on anything with a bit of fruit or vegetables in it.

10. The Five-a day logo is being developed in stages:

- Initially, the logo will be used on appropriate support materials, such as information leaflets and posters.
- Fruit and vegetables (including fresh, frozen, canned and dried) without any added fat, sugar or salt will be the first products able to carry the logo.
- In time, it is intended that nutritional criteria will be established for use of the logo for fruit and vegetables products with added ingredients - sugar, fat or salt. Products will need to contain at least one portion of fruit and vegetables per serving before they can carry the logo.
- A portion indicator will be available to inform people on the contribution a product makes towards five a day.

Criteria for the use of the logo

11. Many processed and composite foods which contain fruit or vegetables, e.g. pasta sauces, convenience meals and prepared desserts may also contain fat, sugar or salt. The recommendation to eat more fruit and vegetables is an important one, but this needs to be considered in the context of advice to reduce consumption of fat, salt and added sugars as part of an overall balanced diet. Therefore nutrition criteria for the use of the logo need to be considered.

12. Various initiatives in the UK and internationally have identified processed foods that have a composition supportive of key dietary recommendations. The criteria for these initiatives have been based on one of three main approaches. These are:

- **Exclusion of all but minimally processed foods.** For example, fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruit and vegetables without any added sugar, fat and or salt (or with minimal amounts). While such an approach is easy to implement, only a restricted range of foods can be included.
- **‘Informed choice’.** Schemes have been established to help consumers identify whether products are relatively low or high in energy, fat, sugars and / or salt. Schemes developed to date in the UK are:

- A banding system, developed by the Coronary Prevention Group (CPG), whereby products are labelled as being LOW or MEDIUM or HIGH in fats, salt and/or sugars.
- A labelling panel, developed by the Institute of Grocery Distribution (IGD), whereby the fat, saturated fat and salt content of a product is shown beside 'Guideline Daily Amounts' (GDA) for men and women based on the current recommendations.

Such an approach can help consumers make decisions about foods, but the onus is on them to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of products e.g the fruit and vegetable content as compared to the fat, salt and or sugar content.

- **Compositional criteria:** Over the past ten years various organisations, including UK retailers, have developed nutrient based compositional criteria to help consumers identify foods with a "healthy eating" profile. Most of these schemes focus on fats, added sugars and salt, rather than on fruit and vegetable consumption per se. Research indicates that these type of schemes are popular among consumers, and does not put the onus on them to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of products. However, it is important that the cut off points for compositional criteria are carefully considered. It will be important to develop appropriate nutrition criteria for the use of the Five a day logo on foods. There is a need to balance wide use of the logo with appropriate use of the logo, taking into consideration that the use of the logo on individual foods may suggest endorsement of that particular food / product.

13. In the UK, there is guidance (issued by the Food Standards Agency) on cut off points for making a claim that a product is "low" in fat salt or added sugars. These are:

- 3g/100g for fat
- 1.5g/100g for saturated fat (which should also not contribute more that 10% total energy content of the product)
- 5g/100g for total sugars
- 100 mg/100 gram for salt.

In the UK, “reduced” claims can be made when the amount of sugar, fat or salt in a product is at least 25% lower than the standard product.

14. The Annex gives a detailed description of UK and international schemes using compositional criteria.

Schemes that are not entirely based on dietary recommendations or legislative guidance take a pragmatic approach, basing criteria on a number of factors, including what an organisation views as practicable. A key difference between schemes is whether they are based on:

the percentage of energy provided by a nutrient - reflect that people tend to eat to meet their energy needs

or

per hundred grams (or per serving) of a food - which are user-friendly to the consumer.

15. The two approaches can have an impact on the foods which are included or excluded from a scheme, and thus the cut off points for nutritional criteria need to be carefully considered.

16. Conclusions

- Research has shown that many consumers are unclear about the key five a day messages and it is important that the five a day message is communicated clearly and consistently.
- Therefore, guidance on “what counts”, is needed to update and clarify current advice.
- DH are currently considering appropriate nutritional criteria for use of the logo on foods containing added fat, salt and sugars.

Annex

Please note that the annex to this paper, considered by SACN, has been removed. This is due to commercial confidentiality.

