

**Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition
6th MEETING OF THE SUBGROUP ON MATERNAL AND CHILD
NUTRITION**

**11 May 2006, Department of Health,
Skipton House, 80 London Road, SE1 6LH**

MINUTES

Attendees:

Dr Anthony Williams (Chair)
Professor Alan Jackson
Mrs Stella Walsh
Professor Tim Key
Dr Robert Fraser
Dr Ann Prentice
Professor Annie Anderson

Secretariat

Dr Sheela Reddy (DH)
Dr Alison Tedstone (FSA)
Dr Peter Sanderson (DH)
Mrs Parminder Nijjar (DH)
Ms Saadia Noorani (FSA)
Ms Alison Tickner (DH)
Mrs Anthea Fitzsimons (DH)
Mrs Justine Currell (DH)

Observers

Dr David Stone (Scottish Executive)
Mrs Maureen Howells (Welsh Assembly)

Chair's Introduction

1. The Chair welcomed Members to the 6th meeting of the Subgroup on Maternal and Child Nutrition.

Apologies for absence

2. Apologies were received from Professor Peter Aggett, and Dr Naresh Chada (NI).

AGENDA ITEM 1 – Minutes of last meeting

3. Members were invited to comment on the minutes of the previous meeting (21 November 2005).

4. The Chair informed secretariat to include Mrs Maureen Howell (Wales) in the attendees list as she had attended the meeting.
5. On page 3 under agenda item 4, bullet 3, it was agreed to insert a full stop after “staff” and begin a new sentence thereafter to read as “Implications for their workload need consideration”.
6. Pending above corrections, minutes were agreed as the correct record of the meeting.

Action: Secretariat

Matters arising

7. The Chair reported progress on matters arising from the previous meeting and members were invited to comment.
8. The Chair confirmed with the secretariat that SACN comments on “NICE guidance on obesity” have been sent to NICE.

AGENDA ITEM 2 – SMCN Subgroup report – The influence of maternal, fetal and child nutrition on the development of disease in later life

9. The Committee discussed the draft report on the influence of maternal, fetal and child nutritional status on the development of disease in later life. The Committee focused on the sections that had been changed, since they last discussed the report.
10. It was requested that the methodology section of the report be developed further. The possibility of there being under-estimation in the associations observed in the epidemiological studies should be discussed, equally, the issue of confounding needed consideration.
11. The Committee requested specific changes to the text of the report as well as the further development of chapter 5. The Committee discussed the conclusions of the report, requesting them to be re-written.

Action: Secretariat and Peter Sanderson to work on the draft report and consider Subgroup’s comments before the next meeting in September 2006.

AGENDA ITEM 3 – Review of Vitamin D

12. The Committee discussed the draft paper on vitamin D. It was requested that it should be expanded and include sections on the following:
 - assaying plasma 25(OH)D concentrations;
 - the relationship between parathyroid hormone and 25(OH)D

concentrations;

- Government policy on sunscreen use;
- availability of vitamin D supplements;
- differences in the advice from NICE and COMA;
- an update on vitamin D intervention studies; and
- adverse effects of high doses of vitamin D.

13. It was requested that the paper should provide an update of the 1998 COMA report and then pose questions for a change in the dietary recommendations.

Action: Secretariat to redraft the paper taking into consideration members' suggestions and present to the Subgroup for further discussion at the September meeting before presenting it to the main committee in October.

AGENDA ITEM 4 – OFCOM Consultation: Television advertising of food & drink products to children

14. The Chair invited members to comment further on the set of collated comments received from SACN members and the accompanying extract of the FSA Benefit Analysis. The Chair introduced Alison Tickner and Anthea Fitzsimons from DH to take any questions from the members on this consultation.

15. A verbal report was provided on the meeting of the Food and Drink Advertising and Promotion Forum on 26 April, attended by one of the SMCN members on SACN's behalf. Industry continues to dismiss the nutrient profiling model, reiterating an old argument that there are no bad foods.

16. Members expressed further comments on the Ofcom report as follows:

- There is a mismatch between SACN's Term of Reference and some of the questions posed by the Ofcom report which relate to risk management. The committee feels particularly uncomfortable commenting on the value of broadcasting profits, particularly when asked to balance this against promoting children's health which it regards as the key objective.
- The Food Standards Agency's "Nutrient Profiling" has been an adequately validated, scrutinised and independently reviewed robust model which has been clearly ignored by Ofcom. Ofcom has focussed on negative aspects, ignoring the opportunities for promoting healthier foods. The only substantive criticism has been that the model assesses nutrients on a per 100gm basis rather than per portion basis. Unfortunately, industry's opposition appears to have strongly influenced Ofcom's proposals. It is important to re-emphasise the Committee's confidence in nutrient profiling - focussing on positive aspects of food promotion. **It should be considered first and foremost as its adoption is of most concern to the Committee.**

- The model refers to foods high in energy, salt and sugar rather than foods high in fat, salt and sugar, as with regard to obesity, it is clear that the issue is energy, not fat per se, and that certain fats are seen as beneficial in terms of disease prevention. Thus, the FSA nutrient profiling scheme scores products for energy, not total fat.
- The consultation has largely ignored the Hastings report which supports the social marketing approach to promoting healthier foods to children.
- The report largely focuses on children rather than adults implying that adults can make informed choices about food adverts which provide insufficient information. The report also needs to focus on older children and adults not solely ages 4-9. Evidence suggests that TV viewing habits of young children differ little from those of older children. The findings of the original Health Select Committee report on Obesity requires consideration.
- The estimated health costs do not adequately capture the cost of morbidity and the report presents conservative estimates. There is also lack of data on dental health which can have huge implications on the expenditure of individuals as well as the public purse.
- Industry makes a statement that there is no evidence that restricting advertising will affect consumption, but this is contradicted twice in the Ofcom document. On page 137, Bolton's research indicates that the more restrictive the policy is in reducing broadcast promotion to children so its effectiveness will disproportionately increase. On page 87, Livingstone concludes that although the measured effects of advertising / television are small, cumulatively an appreciable difference is made to the number of children that fell into the obese category.
- Nutrient profiling and advertising restrictions could be seen as providing economic incentives to modify products and extend ranges in the direction of improved nutrient profiling scores. It is unfortunate that this has not been emphasized as the primary target, because it is certainly easier to change products than people's behaviour.
- The Committee doesn't have the expertise or remit to comment on the BCAP proposals.

Action: Secretariat to compile a response based on the above comments with those of SACN members and circulate to members to finalise before sending to Ofcom. Secretariat to note that Ofcom deadline has been extended from 6 June to 30 June.

AGENDA ITEM 5 – Update on Activities related to Maternal and Child Nutrition

DH Update

17. Justine Currell provided an update on Healthy Start and the rapid evaluation of the practical impact of Phase 1, which is currently underway. A draft report covering evaluations is due at the end of May 2006. Subject to the evaluation findings, the national rollout of Healthy Start is expected in November 2006. DH is working closely with its counterparts in Northern Ireland to introduce Healthy Start at the same time to maintain consistency across UK. Vitamin drops for children rebranded as Healthy Start drops will also be made available sometime during 2006.
18. Members expressed their interest in the training provided to health professionals in Phase 1 of Healthy Start. Members were informed that training/information sessions were provided through contractors at a local level to a selected group of midwives and health visitors. Approximately 95 to 100 health professionals have been trained in Devon & Cornwall. Information/training for Phase 2 is expected to focus mainly on the practicalities of delivering the Healthy Start interventions – understanding the mechanisms and processes underlying Healthy Start, although elements of nutrition and healthy eating advice will form part of this process.

Welsh Assembly Update

19. Maureen Howell gave an update on activities in Wales and informed members that training modules have been developed for the primary care staff. The Community Dietitians' group has also been established and is currently exploring funding avenues to train the community workers.

Scottish Executive Update

20. Members were informed that a consultation paper on Infant Feeding Strategy for Scotland was launched on 31 March and is available on the Executive's website. Proposals have been put forward on restriction of certain foods in schools. In light of the greater incidence of the neural tube defects, Scotland is keen to see progress on the issue of fortification of flour with folic acid. The Secretariat informed Professor Stone that the Health Ministers will soon be considering SACN's recommendations along with FSA's advice before making a final decision.

Northern Ireland Update

21. The Chair drew members' attention to the update provided by Northern Ireland on Dr Chada's behalf.

AOB

Infant Feeding Strategy for Scotland – Consultation document

22. The consultation paper on "*Infant feeding Strategy for Scotland*" was brought to committee's attention for any comments. The Chair expressed his views that since SACN is a risk assessment committee rather than risk management, it was not appropriate for members to comment on this consultation paper.

Members were content and agreed to offer individual comments as appropriate.

New WHO Child Growth Standards

23. Members were informed that WHO has published a new Child Growth Standard for infants and children up to the age of 5 years. This new standard establishes breastfeeding as a norm and the breastfed infant as the standard for measuring healthy growth. DH would like SACN to advise on their suitability for use in the UK by end of this year.
24. The Chair informed members that the proposed route to address this question of validity for use in UK will be initially to invite experts from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health and others to discuss this with members of SMCN at a meeting to be convened in the Autumn. A report would then be generated for presentation to SACN at its meeting in February 2007. Members were content with the proposed way forward.
25. The next SMCN meeting will be held on 11 September 2006. Secretariat to email details of venue & other details at a nearer date.
26. The Chair thanked members for their attendance.

Action: Secretariat