

**Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on  
Fluorides and Health held on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020 @ 11am**

**Present:** Professor Suresh Pillai (Chairman), Dr Brett Duane (Vice Chairman),  
Dr Máiréad Harding (telecon), Mr Ray Parle, Dr Gerard Colleran  
Professor Blanaid Daly, Dr Therese Montgomery, Dr Patrick Quinn  
(telecon) Dr Una Fallon (telecon)

**Apologies** Mr Michael Madden

**In attendance: From Secretariat:** Ms Orlaith Kennedy, Ms Etain Kett  
Mr Waleed Almutairi (observer status)

**EB Minute 01/20: Apologies**

Apologies were noted.

**EB Minute 02/20: Expert Body Minutes**

The minutes from the meeting of November 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 were agreed.

**EB Minute 03/20: Matters Arising**

It was noted that Dr Marie Sutton, Health Research Board, is a Protocol Reviewer for the National Toxicology Program's (NTP) draft study, 'Systematic Review of Fluoride Exposure and Neurodevelopmental and Cognitive Health Effects' and it was agreed to invite her to the next Plenary Meeting to give a synopsis of this draft report. It was agreed that the New and Emerging Issues Health Sub-Committee will review the draft report before then and that it will be included in the systematic review.

It was noted that the Expert Body had submitted a Progress Report for 2019 to the Department of Health in December 2019.

It was noted that a new report is due to be published by the Health Research Board 'Evidence Review on Measures to Reduce the need for Dental Amalgam'.

It was noted that all fluoride testing results are now collated in the Environmental Health Service Database. It was noted that Health Service Executive monthly fluoride

checks are reviewed by National Fluoride Steering Committee and the Local Fluoridation Monitoring Committees. It was noted that explanations are required for any non-conformances and that there is a high level of compliance. It was suggested that an annual summary of non-compliances be made available to the Expert Body by HSE Environmental Health.

It was noted that Trinity College Dublin is working with NUI Maynooth on geomapping for 3000 individuals and their fluoridation status. It was noted that a PhD Study has been carried out as part of the TILDA project and it was agreed to invite Dr Jacinta Mc Loughlin to present this to the Expert Body at its next Plenary.

#### **EB Minute 04/20: Correspondence**

Correspondence for October 2019 – January 2020 was noted.

#### **EB Minute 05/20: Implementation Plan for the National Oral Health Policy**

It was noted that the Expert Body is a scientific/advisory committee and it is not within its remit to implement policy. It was further agreed that the Expert Body must remain independent. It was noted that any role that the Expert Body might have in an information campaign would be in combatting misinformation and reviewing/fact checking to ensure that it is evidence-based.

The Expert Body discussed a response for the Department of Health and it was agreed that the Secretariat would circulate a draft based on these discussions for approval.

Dr Therese Montgomery declared her intent to apply for a research grant as primary supervisor to supervise a pilot project investigating the total systemic fluoride concentrations a subsection of the Irish population.

#### **EB Minute 06/20: Correspondence**

Correspondence was noted.

#### **EB Minute 07/20: Report of the Sub-Committees**

A briefing was given by the NEI Health Sub-Committee regarding the draft search strategy. It was noted that Dr Máiréad Harding and Dr Brett Duane are leading this piece of work and that Mr Waleed Almutairi is involved in piloting the search strategy.

It was noted that Dr Patrick Quinn is starting a PhD in medical ethics and that this might help inform the application of ethical principles to the evidence. It was noted that there is no requirement for the assistance from a legal librarian at this stage.

It was agreed that microbiome is a topic of relevance to the public and it was noted that it would be followed up on in respect to whether further research is required in this area regarding the impact of fluoride on oral microbiome.

It was noted that extrapolation of papers regarding toxicology was undergoing discussion and review.

It was noted that some papers pending review by the Expert Body would also be critically appraised by postgraduate students in Dental Public Health, University College Cork, in order to contribute to their learning outcomes as the next generation of Dental Public Health Practitioners. It was agreed that this would need to be supervised by an academic supervisor.

Communications Sub-Committee briefing:

It was noted that the FAQ was reviewed by the Communications Subcommittee. It was suggested that the readability age be further reduced in order to improve readability for the majority of the general public.

A draft page for an updated Expert Body website was shown to the members and it was agreed that it was a big improvement on what is currently available.

It was suggested that links to the regulations and to European decisions regarding water fluoridation be made available on the Expert Body website.

It was noted that a draft Communications Strategy had been reviewed by the Communications Sub-Committee and that it would be circulated to the Plenary for review.

New and Emerging Issues Environment (NEIE) Sub-Committee briefing:

It was noted that HRA Environmental Services conducted training on 'Fluoridation of Water Supplies' in September and December 2019, on behalf of the Local Authority Services National Training Group (LASNTG).

It was noted that the issuing of the Code of Practice on the Fluoridation of Drinking Water would be discussed with Irish Water.

It was noted that a key priority for NEIE is to meet with the EPA on an annual basis regarding the EPA role on the drinking water quality and regulatory aspects of water fluoridation.

It was noted that the NEIE will also liaise with the HSE National Steering Group on Fluoridation regarding the national drinking water fluoridation programme.

#### **EB Minute 08/20: Conferences**

It was agreed that Expert Body attendance at the Eurotox Conference in Copenhagen would be important.

It was noted that attendance at the International Conference on Life Cycle Assessment of Food might also inform the work of the Expert Body.

It was noted that Expert Body members might be attending the following conferences on behalf of their own organisations and if so could inform the Expert Body of anything relevant to fluorides and health.

1. Annual meeting of the Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC) in Dublin, May 2020
2. Annual scientific meeting of the International Association of Dental Research, Marseille, September 2020
3. Environmental EPA Water Conference in Galway.
4. Environ 2020 30<sup>th</sup> Irish Environmental Researchers Colloquium, DCU

#### **EB Minute 09/20: Membership of the Expert Body**

It was agreed that the Expert Body would write to the Department again regarding the gap in expertise in Applied Epidemiology since the resignation of Dr Marie Sutton. It was also agreed that representation in ecotoxicology would be advantageous.

#### **EB Minute 10/20: Any Other Business**

It was noted that a Progress Report was submitted to the Department of Health for 2019.

The paper 'Guidelines for use of fluorides in Australia: update 2019' was noted and it was agreed to refer to it in the response to the Department of Health regarding the Implementation Plan for the National Oral Health Policy.



**EB Minute 11/20: Date of Next Meeting**

The Chairman thanked those all for attending and the meeting was declared closed at 16:16pm. The date for the next meeting was agreed as 12<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_