



An Corpán Oilte Éireannach
um Fluairídí agus Sláinte

The Irish Expert Body
on Fluorides and Health

PO Box 12343, Dublin 18, Ireland T: +353 1 2136112 E: secretariat@dentalhealth.ie W: www.fluoridesandhealth.ie

**Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting (Zoom) of the Irish Expert Body on
Fluorides and Health held on Wednesday 26th October
2022 @ 11am**

Chairperson:	Mr Ray Parle
Present	Professor Máiréad Harding, Dr Therese Montgomery, Dr Gerard Colleran, Dr Lina Zgaga
Quorum:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
In Attendance - Secretariat	Ms Orlaith Kennedy, Ms Etain Kett
EB Minute 20/22 Apologies:	Professor Blánaid Daly, Dr Patrick Quinn

EB Minute 21/22: Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

It was declared that individual academics are carrying out a mini-review regarding water fluoridation and the oral microbiome, and that it is not the Expert Body doing so. It was noted that individuals are not excluded from carrying out research and that by declaring a conflict of interest it is recorded and transparent.

EB Minute 22/22: Approval of the minutes of the meeting of [11th May 2022]:

The Minutes were approved subject to minor amendments.

EB Minute 23/22: Matters Arising

It was noted that a Governance Meeting was held with the Department of Health in July.

It was noted that Fluoride is expected to be added to drinking water across the UK, with a Health and Care Bill going through Parliament. It was further noted a public consultation has been held as part of this process. It was noted that links to information on the consultation would be circulated to the Expert Body.

It was noted that water fluoridation is mandatory in the Republic of Ireland under the Health (Fluoridation of Water Supplies) Act, 1960 and that additional funding is needed to fully implement the Fluoridation of Water Supplies Regulations 2007. It was further noted that one of the main Terms of Reference of the Expert Body is to advise the Minister on all issues relating to the fluoridation of public water supplies and its impact on the other aspects of policy.

It was noted that the Childsmile Programme in Scotland has been recently evaluated. It was noted that the National Water Resources Plan is projecting 25 years ahead to include Climate Change.

It was noted that the National Toxicology Program (USA) report to evaluate potential neurobehavioral effects from exposure to fluoride during development and adulthood in mice and rats is yet to be published.



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EB Minute 24/22: Correspondence

Correspondence was noted.

It was noted that the Health Research Board intends to publish its report shortly. It was agreed that the Expert Body will need to be given sufficient time by the Department of Health to consider it in full, once it has been published. It was noted that the term of office of the Expert Body finishes the end of December 2022.

Report on activities:

EB Minute 25/22: Report of the Sub-Committees

NEI Health Sub-Committee: Report

It was noted that the sub-committee is waiting for the publication of the systematic review carried out by the Health Research Board 'The Systemic Impact of Water Fluoridation on Non-Oral Population Health Effects of Water Fluoridation'.

It was noted that the Expert Body document regarding gaps in research was made available to the Health Research Board by the Department of Health in July. The Health Research Board indicated that further research is required regarding fluoride and toxicity. Dr Therese Montgomery estimated the number of studies published regarding fluoride and toxicity, fluoride and human toxicity, fluoride and neurotoxicity, fluoride and microbiome using the Scopus Database. It was noted that there has been a very large increase in the rates from publications from 2012 – 2022.

It was noted that Dr Gary Moran (co-opted member of the sub-committee) has taken the lead on a review on the microbiome and that it was reviewed by both Dr Lina Zgaga and Dr Therese Montgomery. Professor Máiréad Harding congratulated them on strengthening the knowledge of the Expert Body through their expertise on the microbiome. It was further noted that the sub-committee notified the Expert Body that the research was being carried out and that any publications will be by named academics and not attributable to the Expert Body. It was noted that the anticipated submission date for the article is end of 2022.

The NEI Health Sub-Committee continues on an ongoing basis to review all aspects of fluoride including its safety and effectiveness in preventing dental caries, based on the most up-to-date evidence-based information.

The following papers were noted as of interest, to date none of the papers reviewed change the advice to the Minister for Health concerning CWF.

'The genetic influence in fluorosis', Pramanik & Saha 2017

'An Overview of Dental Services in Northern Ireland and Ireland' Donovan et al 2021.

'A new understanding of the relationship between sugars, dental caries, and fluoride use; implications for limits on sugars consumption' Sheiham & James 2014

'Changes in household food and drink purchases following restrictions on the advertisement of high fat, salt and sugar products across the Transport for London network: a controlled interrupted time series analysis' Yau et al 2022.



'Association Between Osteoarthritis and Water Fluoride Among Tongyu Residents, China, 2019: a Case-Control of Population-Based Study', Sowanou et al 2021.

COVID-19 and the impact on child dental services in the UK', Okike et al 2021

Drinking Water, Renyer & McFadden 2022

SCIENTIFIC OPINION. Guidance on selected default values to be used by the EFSA Scientific Committee, Scientific Panels and Units in the absence of actual measured Data'.

'Necessity to Pay Attention to the Effects of Low Fluoride on Human Health: an Overview of Skeletal and Non-skeletal Damages in Epidemiologic Investigations and Laboratory Studies', Zhou et al 2021

'The cholinergic system, intelligence, and dental fluorosis in school-aged children with low-to-moderate fluoride exposure', Wang et al 2021.

- It was noted that there is not enough data to make conclusions about the effects on cholinergic system in the CNS.

'Low-moderate fluoride exposure and intelligence among Chinese school-aged children: Role of circulating mtDNA content', Zhou et al 2021

- It was noted that although these are different authors, it is the same location and same sample population as Wang et al 2021. While statistical link might exist, it is unclear what the proposed mechanism might be.

It was noted that there is not anything in either of these papers of concern to the Minister for Health.

The CATFISH study: Cumbrian Assessment of Teeth: Fluoride Intervention Study for Health.

- This research will make a major contribution to the understanding of the costs and effects of water fluoridation in the UK in the 21st Century. Its findings will help inform UK policy on this public health intervention and may have a significant impact on public health policy in other developed countries.
- Dr Lina Zgaga will follow up with the authors. The study is drawing on a truly unique opportunity in Cumbria.

It was noted that papers will be listed according to subject matter, journal and impact factor.

Professor Máiréad Harding was required to leave the meeting at 13:10.

NEI Environment Sub-Committee Report:

It was noted that there will be greater transparency under the Drinking Water Directive regarding the reporting of fluoride non-conformances.

It was noted that the sub-committee has been unable to proceed with the following due to uncertainty about the future role of the Expert Body:

arranging the annual liaison meeting with the Environmental Protection Agency to discuss issues of mutual concern;



monitoring of fluoride results as part of the Irish Water Groundwater Monitoring Programme – it was noted that Mr Ray Parle will follow up with the HSE in this regard;

developments regarding a fluoride tablet delivery system in the USA and its future suitability for use in Ireland.

It was further noted that the Chair of the Sub-Committee has recently retired and has lost access to some groups that he was previously involved with through the HSE.

Communications Sub-Committee

There are several outstanding issues that require clarification/discussion from the Department of Health including:

- there is a need to get feedback from the Department of Health regarding the Communications Strategy which was submitted in July 2021.
- media training may be beneficial for the Expert Body spokesperson and for the members of the Communications Sub-Committee (should the Spokesperson be unavailable).

Google Analytics were noted regarding the Expert Body website.

A copy of the CDO presentation to the Oral Health Promotion Research Group Annual Conference (December 2021) will be requested again.

EB Minute 26/22: Future Role of the Expert Body

It was noted and agreed that the Expert Body has grave concerns that it has not been informed of future plans for an Expert Body post December 2022. It was further noted that the Expert Body is deeply concerned about the lack of succession/handover plans. It was agreed that continuous monitoring by an expert multidisciplinary team is required regarding community water fluoridation in Ireland, for the public and for the environment. It was noted that the Forum on Fluoridation had recommended that an Expert Body should be established to advise the Minister for Health on an ongoing basis on all aspects of fluoride and its delivery methods as an established health technology. The importance of the process of public consultation which was adopted during the convening of the Forum on Fluoridation was noted. It was agreed that the Expert Body write to the Department of Health to outline its concerns again.

EB Minute 27/22: Any other business (AOB)

There was no AOB

EB Minute 28/22: Next Meeting

Date:	The chairperson thanked those all for attending. The meeting was declared closed at 13:48pm. No date was set for the next meeting.
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Actions Arising from This Meeting:			
Item No.	Action	Person Applicable	Timeframe
23/22	Links to information on the public consultation regarding water fluoridation in the UK to be circulated to the Expert Body.	Mr Michael Madden	Immediately
25/22	Request a copy of the CDO presentation to the Oral Health Promotion Research Group Annual Conference (December 2021).	Secretariat	Immediately
25/22	Follow-up with the authors of the CATFISH study: Cumbrian Assessment of Teeth: Fluoride Intervention Study for Health.	Dr Lina Zgaga	Immediately
25/22	List of Papers assigned to the NEI subcommittee to be listed according to subject matter, journal and impact factor.	Secretariat	By next NEI Health Sub-Committee Meeting
25/22	Follow-up with HSE regarding the Irish Water Groundwater Monitoring Programme and fluoride results.	Mr Ray Parle	Immediately
26/22	Draft response to Department of Health regarding Expert Body concerns	All Secretariat	TBC
Chairperson's signature and date			