



Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting (Zoom) of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health held on Tuesday 6th October 2020 @ 11am

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

Apologies Dr Una Fallon, Dr Gerard Colleran, Mr Michael Madden

In attendance: From Secretariat: Ms Orlaith Kennedy, Ms Etain Kett

EB Minute 24/20: Apologies

Apologies were noted.

EB Minute 25/20: A Minute's Silence for Mrs Teresa Montgomery

A minute's silence was observed for Mrs Teresa Montgomery R.I.P. mother of Expert Body member Dr Therese Montgomery.

EB Minute 26/20: Expert Body Minutes

The minutes from the meeting of May 12th 2020 were agreed.

EB Minute 27/20: Matters Arising

It was noted that members will inform the Secretariat of any online conferences they would like to attend for the period October-December 2020 and to notify of any conference they would like to attend in 2021.

It was noted that some of the online meeting platforms have responded to the current crisis and improved their functionality, but it was agreed to continue using Zoom.

It was noted that the Expression of Interest for membership of the Expert Body was advertised with a closing date of 15th October 2020. It was further noted that expertise has been requested in Ecotoxicity/Ecotoxicology and in Applied Epidemiology.

It was noted that approval had been received to carry out research by Athlone Institute of Technology concerning systemic fluoride concentrations in the Irish population. It was further noted that interviews for a PhD student regarding the research have been postponed until the New Year.

EB Minute 28/20: Correspondence

Correspondence for May 2020 – September 2020 was noted.

It was noted that a very comprehensive report/response had been received from the Health Products Regulatory Authority concerning a query from the Expert Body on the availability of fruit flavoured toothpaste in Ireland.

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It was noted that the Expert Body had contacted Irish Water about the revised Drinking Water Directive (not yet in place) and the availability of information to the public on water fluoridation in public water supplies.

It was noted that the Department of Health had advised that the new Expert Body logo be available in both English and as Gaeilge.

It was noted that the Expert Body had received a query regarding a court case involving the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. It was noted that the Expert Body would continue to monitor this matter.

EB Minute 29/20: Presentation from Professor Brian O’Connell

A presentation was given by Professor Brian O’Connell, Dean of the Dublin Dental University Hospital to the Expert Body on ‘Update on the assessment of lifetime exposure to community water fluoridation among older adults in Ireland’ (part of the Irish Longitudinal Study on Aging (TILDA)). It was noted that the study fits with the requirements of Section 6 of the Health (Fluoridation of Water Supplies) Act 1960 which require the Minister to arrange, from time to time, for such studies as appear for him to be desirable to examine the impact of water fluoridation on general health and also on the relationship between water fluoridation and oral health. It was agreed that this presentation was very useful in informing the work of the Expert Body and was suggested that a further presentation on the geomapping aspect of the study be requested.

EB Minute 30/20: Report of the Sub-Committees

It was noted that the Chairs of the Sub-Committees discussed relevant aspects of the draft Expert Body Work Plan 2020 before submission to the Department of Health.

NEI Health Sub-Committee:

It was noted that the NEI Health Sub-Committee discussed the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the systematic review and that the Search strategy will be refined. The sub-committee will revert back to an Information Specialist.

It was noted that a review of the Revised *Draft NTP Monograph: Systematic Review of Fluoride Exposure and Neurodevelopmental and Cognitive Health Effects* is being carried out by the *National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NAS)*. It was further noted that an open session of the NAS review meeting will take place on the 19th October and that the Expert Body will continue to monitor any new and emerging evidence.

It was noted that Professor Gary Moran will be invited to join the NEI Health Sub-Committee as a co-opted member with expertise in the microbiome.

It was noted that papers have been assigned for review to members of the NEI Health Sub-Committee.

It was suggested by the Sub-Committee that the Expert Body reach out to individuals with expertise in relation to future research needs. This was agreed by the Plenary Body and noted that it would be included on the Agenda in 2021.

Communications Sub-Committee briefing:

The constructive input (as part of the training) for the doctoral student Mr Waleed Almutairi, DChDent (Dental Public Health) Student was noted.

It was noted that two versions of the FAQ were prepared for the Expert Body website including a long version and a Plain English version.

It was further noted that emerging literature that specifically deals with IQ was considered as part of the work for the FAQ. It was noted that currently this emerging issue does not change the Expert Body advice to the Minister for Health concerning water fluoridation in Ireland.

It was noted that Dr Máiréad Harding reviewed Communications aspects of the Expert Body Work Plan alongside the review for the New and Emerging Issues Health Sub-Committee.

As part of the sub-committee Work Plan, the Expert Body website – content and aesthetics has been reviewed/revamped by the Communications Sub-Committee and the Secretariat. The Website and the FAQ will be the main communications tools for the Expert Body.

It was noted that the Communications Strategy was reviewed by the Communications Sub-Committee and reviewed/approved by the Expert Body. It was noted that engagement and uniform messaging with health professionals is an important part of the Communications Strategy.

It was noted that a letter will be sent to the Managing Editor of Irish Dentistry re an article '*Maternal fluoride exposure and child IQ linked*'.

It was noted that infographics have been published as part of the Fluoride And Caring for Children's Teeth (FACCT) study - Health Research Board (HRB) Knowledge Exchange and Dissemination Scheme (KEDS) 2017: *Supporting individuals and organisations involved in implementation of community water fluoridation*. These infographics are tailored dissemination materials for specified target groups based on the findings of the FACCT study.

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

It was noted that due to other commitments Mr Michael Madden has stepped down as Chair of the sub-Committee and that Mr Ray Parle was elected as the new Chair.

It was noted that a meeting has been arranged with the Environmental Protection Agency EPA/ NEI Environment Sub-Committee to discuss issues of mutual relevance, including drinking water and fluoridation and naturally occurring fluoride in groundwater drinking water sources.

It was noted that a liaison meeting has been requested with the National Steering Group on Fluoridation in order to introduce the Expert Body and the work that it does and how it interacts with the work of the Steering Group.

It was noted that an interagency review group regarding the implementation of the new Drinking Water Directive has been set up, membership includes the Health Service Executive, Irish Water and Local Authorities, Mr Ray Parle is also a member of this group.



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It was agreed that attendance at conferences is important to keep informed of any new and emerging issues regarding fluoride and the environment. It was noted that Mr Ray Parle attended the EPA Water Event 2020 on behalf of the Expert Body but that there were no issues regarding fluoride and the environment. It was further noted that Mr Parle will attend the Annual International Association of Hydrogeologists (Irish Group) Groundwater Conference 19th & 20th October 2020.

It was noted that the matter concerning Irish Water Technical Training and distribution of the Code of Practice on the Fluoridation of Drinking Water will be followed up on.

EB Minute 31/20: Website

It was agreed that the Expert Body members will review the draft website and respond to the Secretariat with any amendments before it goes live.

EB Minute 32/20: AOB

In line with the Terms of Reference, it was agreed that work on a draft Progress Report for 2020 would commence and that a Plenary will be held in December for final approval before submission to the Department of Health.

EB Minute 33/20: Date of Next Meeting

The Chairman thanked those all for attending and thanked Ms Etain Kett and Ms Orlaith Kennedy for progressing the work of the Expert Body. The meeting was declared closed at 14:01pm. Suggested dates for the next meeting will be circulated by the Secretariat.

Signed: _____

Date: _____