

**Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on  
Fluorides and Health held on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016**

**Present:** Mr Ray Parle (Vice Chairman), Ms Bernadette McDonnell, Professor Denis O'Mullane, Mr Stephen McDermott, Mr Rowland Reece

**In attendance: From Secretariat:** Ms Etain Kett, Ms Patricia Gilseyan O'Neill

**Apologies:** Dr Seamus O'Hickey (Chairman), Professor John Clarkson.

**EB Minute 01/16: Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were noted. With the transfer of the functions of water services authorities to Irish Water, as provided for in the Water Services (No. 2) Act 2013, the Department of Environment, Community & Local Government will no longer be available for membership of the Expert Body. It was further noted that membership in general will be considered in the context of the future role of the Expert Body.

**EB Minute 02/16: Minutes of the last meeting (10<sup>th</sup> November 2015)**

The minutes from the meeting of November 10<sup>th</sup> 2015 were agreed subject to minor amendments.

**EB Minute 03/16: Matters Arising**

It was noted that currently that Limerick City is fluoridated but that Limerick County is not and that capital investment is required for this. It was noted that the EPA carried out a strategic environmental assessment regarding Orthophosphate dosing and that the pilot programme is expected to start in late April.

It was agreed that there would be no follow-up regarding the article in Donegal Now. It was agreed that feedback regarding the Expert Body FAQ would be reviewed by the NEI Sub-Committee.

### **EB Minute 04/16: Correspondence**

A report of all correspondence received since the last meeting was noted.

The Secretariat was thanked for responding to Freedom of Information Requests.

### **EB Minute 05/16: Report of Sub-committees**

The Quality Assurance Sub-committee reported the following:

- It was noted that the Future Role of Expert Body is still under consideration by the Department of Health . the QA Sub-Committee is awaiting approval for its Work Plan.
- The Review of Code of Practice on the Fluoridation of Drinking Water 2007 is in the final stages.
- The Protocol for the Independent Testing of Hydrofluosilicic Acid was also reviewed to take account of comments from the Public Analyst Laboratory and the National Steering Group on Fluoridation, HSE
- It was noted that the amended Protocol on the Independent Testing of Hydrofluosilicic Acid (to include the use of a tamper-evident container) would be circulated to Irish Water, The Public Analyst and to the supplier of Hydrofluosilicic Acid.

The New and Emerging Issues Sub-committee reported the following:

- The NEI Sub-Committee's review of the published literature has not resulted in any findings which necessitated any alteration to the Expert Body advice to the Minister of Health. The papers do not impact or change the current practices on water fluoridation in the Republic of Ireland. The review included the following papers:

- ***'A critique of recent economic evaluations of community water fluoridation', Ko & Thiessen 2014***

The calculations in this study are made on incorrect assumptions.

The economic evaluation used invalid assumptions relating to both benefits and costs.

Ko & Thiessen did not perform any type of sensitivity analysis to deal with uncertainty in their parameters.

This paper does not impact on current practices or policies on water fluoridation in Ireland.

- ***A cost effectiveness analysis of community water fluoridation in New Zealand', Fyfe et al 2015***

It was concluded that CWF is a cost effective public health intervention in New Zealand for all populations. However they noted that for smaller communities cost effectiveness is more marginal and dependent on the population profile.

- ***'Economic Evaluation of Community Water Fluoridation, A Community Guide Systematic Review', (in press) Ran & Chattopadhyay***

Recent evidence continues to indicate that the economic benefit of community water fluoridation exceeds the intervention cost. Further, the benefit. cost ratio increases with the community population size.

The above three papers were referred by the Expert Body to a Health Economist for review.

- ***Effect of water fluoridation on the development of medial vascular calcification in uremic rats', Martín – Pardillos et al 2014***

This was reviewed by a Nephrologist, as agreed at the last NEI Sub-Committee Meeting.

This paper does not impact on current practices or policies on water fluoridation.

- ***'Actions for the government to improve oral health', Royal College of Surgeons (Eng), Faculty of Dental Surgery, 2015***

This paper was brought to attention of the Department of Health at the November Plenary Meeting of the Expert Body.

- ***'Draft White Paper: Drinking Water Fluoridation: State of the Debate', SGM (USA) 2015***

This paper was brought to the attention of the Plenary Meeting and it was agreed that the FAQ of the Expert Body be reviewed by the New and Emerging Issues Sub-Committee.

- ***‘Effect of Water Fluoridation on Dental Caries Prevention in Ulju-gun’, Kim et al 2015***

The paper is not well structured and provides little information on details of the study. This paper does not impact on current practices or policies on water fluoridation in Ireland.

- ***‘Dental health impact of water fluoridation in children living in Bedford Borough Council in 2008, 2009 and 2015’, Public Health England 2015***

The paper lacks essential information required in a report of a scientific study of this design.

This paper does not impact on current practices or policies on water fluoridation in Ireland.

- ***‘The association between exaggeration in health related science news and academic press releases: retrospective observational study’, Sumner et al 2015***

Exaggeration in news is strongly associated with exaggeration in press releases. Improving the accuracy of academic press releases could represent a key opportunity for reducing misleading health related news.

- ***‘Fluoridation and hypothyroidism –a commentary on Peckham et al’ Foley 2015***

Foley’s critique methods matches the previous critique of the New and Emerging Issues Sub-Committee.

- ***‘Fluoride and Oral Health’, O’Mullane et al 2016***

It was noted that this revision of the World Health Organisation publication *Fluorides and Oral Health* (1994) covers water fluoridation, salt milk, fluoride tablets, toothpaste, gels and varnishes. It was further noted that it has been published in a special edition of *Community Dental Health* and is available on open access.

It was agreed that it should be distributed at the forthcoming IADR Conference in Seoul and also electronically to the RCSI, RCPI, IDHA, IDA, Society of Chief and Principal Dental Surgeons. It was also agreed that the paper should be considered for a summary of Fluorides and Oral Health in the Journal of the Irish Dental Association and that Dr Carmel Parnell would assist Professor O'Mullane in this regard.

- The Secretariat checked the website of the National Cancer Institute (USA) regarding fluoride studies that looked at population trends as well as studies that analysed bone tumours. It was noted that the most recent paper referred to Kim et al 2011 had previously been reviewed by the NEI Sub-Committee
- The NEI workplan, submitted to the Dept. of Health, included a recommendation from the Expert Body that a review of water fluoridation be carried out.
- The Report from the Health Research Board has been published and there are no new or emerging issues contained in the Report.
- The Secretariat was informed that a Pilot Project is being carried out in Limerick concerning Orthophosphate Dosing. It was agreed to ask for an update regarding this Pilot Project

#### **EB Minute 06/16: Report of Executive Committee**

The Report of the Executive Committee was noted.

It was noted that the Budget has been agreed and approved by the Department of Health for the provision by the Dental Health Foundation (DHF) of secretariat services for the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health, or any successor body that may be appointed, for 1st January to 31st December 2016. The approved level maintains funding at 2014 and 2015 levels.

Secretariat Costs for October . December 2015 were reviewed. It was noted that these costs were within budget.

### **EB Minute 07/16: Future Role of Expert Body**

There was no update regarding the future role of the Expert Body.

### **EB Minute 08/16: AOB**

It was noted that the paper "*Risk assessment of fluoride intake from tea in the Republic of Ireland and its implications for public health and water fluoridation*", Waugh et al 2016 would be referred to the NEI Sub-Committee. It was further agreed that as the paper makes the claim that the tea products tested in this study do not comply with EU food law it was agreed that this article should be brought to the attention of the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

### **EB Minute 09/16: Date of Next Meeting**

The Vice Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 12:24pm. The date for the next meeting was suggested as Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

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

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