

## Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health held on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> October 2014

**Present:** Dr Seamus O'Hickey (Chairman), Mr Michael Kilcoyne, Mr Ray Parle, Ms Bernadette McDonnell, Mr Gerry Flannery, Mr Rowland Reece, Professor Denis O'Mullane, Professor John Clarkson, Mr Stephen McDermott

**In attendance:** **From Secretariat:** Ms Etain Kett, Ms Patricia Gilsenan O'Neill  
**From Department of Health:** Dr Dympna Kavanagh, Chief Dental Officer

**Apologies:** Mr Luke Varley

### EB Minute 18/14: Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were noted.

### EB Minute 19/14: Minutes of the last meeting (18<sup>th</sup> June 2014)

The minutes from the meeting of June 18<sup>th</sup> were agreed.

### EB Minute 20/14: Matters Arising

It was noted that it is planned that the Health Research Board literature review of the health effects of water fluoridation be complete by December 2014.

### EB Minute 21/14: Correspondence

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

It was noted a query had been received from the British Fluoridation Society regarding the recent motion passed by Dublin City Council.

Ms Patricia Gilsenan O'Neill was thanked for information sent to Senator Mary White.

### EB Minute 22/14: 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 ó the QA Sub-Committee is awaiting approval for its Work Plan.
- The Department of Health is currently considering the suggestion that Irish Water be co-opted as a member of the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee and that the

Department of Environment, Community & Local Government be replaced by Irish Water Representatives on the Expert Body.

- It was noted that the QA Sub-Committee had concerns that some aspects of its work plan would not be included in the future role of the Expert Body
- It was noted that further amendments have been made to the Code of Practice since the last Plenary Meeting and that it is to be circulated to the relevant stakeholders for feedback.

It was agreed that it is crucial that site visits to suppliers of Hydrofluosilicic Acid are carried out. It was noted that approval has been given by the Plenary to send sub-committee members to visit the sites in Ireland and in Spain but that it was agreed that this will not go ahead until the Tender for the Supply & Delivery of Hydrofluosilicic Acid has been awarded. It was further noted that the contract for the Hydrofluosilicic Acid (HFSA) had been extended to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015.

It was noted that daily fluoride testing is carried out by the County Councils and that monthly independent testing is carried out by the Public Analyst Laboratory. It was noted that the fluoride results are reviewed by the Local Fluoride Monitoring Committees who meet on a quarterly basis. It was agreed that Dr Stephanie O'Keeffe, National Director, Health and Wellbeing, Health Service Executive be written to regarding the inclusion of performance indicators regarding fluoride testing for the HSE Service Plan.

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

- It was noted that eleven papers were reviewed by the Sub-Committee. It was further noted that there was nothing in the reviewed literature that would lead to a change in advice from the Expert Body to the Department of Health regarding water fluoridation.
- ***'Water fluoridation could save NHS millions every year', Yeung 2014***  
This was a letter to the Lancet Journal from Mr Albert Yeung Consultant in Dental Public Health, NHS, highlighting the fact that water fluoridation was saving millions every year. It was agreed that this was a useful paper.
- ***'Health effects of water fluoridation: A review of the scientific evidence', The Royal Society of New Zealand, 2014***  
It was noted that the report stated that water fluoridation is the safest and most appropriate public health approach for promoting dental health and that there was unanimous agreement of no significant adverse effects. The report also stated that Water fluoridation provides significant benefits to dental health and that it is economical and fair.  
It was noted that Professor Mark Ferguson, Director General, Science Foundation Ireland oversaw this report.  
It was agreed that this paper should be brought to the attention of the Health Research Board.
- ***'Fluoride intake of infants living in non-fluoridated and fluoridated areas' Zohoori et al 2014***

Dr Wayne Anderson, FSAI, was requested to review this paper. There was nothing in Dr Anderson's comments that would change the Expert Body opinion regarding the use of tap water in infant formula

Dr Anderson suggested that should research funds become available to the Expert Body or the Department of Health it may be prudent to fund a similar but larger study here in Ireland once the relevance of the risk of fluorosis caused by exposure to fluoride at this early age has been determined.

- The FACCT project - the fieldwork is complete and the analysis is progressing
- TILDA - The field work is progressing well and should be finished by approximately Summer 2015.
- Topical Fluoride Guidelines - FACCT is generating information on 12yr olds, therefore this review is on hold until the data from FACCT is available.
- Dr Dymrna Kavanagh is liaising with the HSE regarding Spokespersons for communications for dental, public health and environmental issues concerning water fluoridation. It was agreed that there is a need to get this set up as soon as possible.
- It was noted that the FDI Policy statement 'Promoting Oral Health through Water Fluoridation' was published (Professor John Clarkson and Professor John Spencer were both involved in it) and that it had been passed by 170 National Dental Associations worldwide. It was further noted that the FDI are currently considering a policy paper regarding sugar intake and oral health.
- It was noted that a query had been received from the National Fluoride Information Services, New Zealand regarding the translation of non-english papers. It was noted that this had been previously considered by the Council of European Dentists and it was suggested that the query be raised with Dr Paula Vassallo, CDO Malta as part of the considerations 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.

A review of evidence of the health effects of water fluoridation has been undertaken for the Department of Health by the Evidence Generation and Knowledge Brokering Unit of the Health Research Board.

### **EB Minute 23/14: Report of Executive Committee**

The Report of the Executive Committee was noted.

The following motion was accepted by Seanad Éireann: (1<sup>st</sup> October 2014):

*"That Seanad Éireann:*

*Notes that water fluoridation is not medicinal but the adjustment of the natural concentration of fluoride in drinking water to the recommended level for the prevention of dental caries (tooth decay);*

*Notes that water fluoridation is a safe and effective means of prevention of tooth decay;*

*Notes that there is no evidence that water fluoridation, at the recommended level, causes any ill effects to human health; but*

*Notes that fluoridation, and its effects on health and related matters, is kept under constant review’.*

The Secretariat Costs budget for 2014 was split into two six month periods due to the review of the future role of the Expert Body by the Department of Health.

It was noted that the period January to June 2014 come within budget and that the Secretariat Costs budget for the period July to December 2014 is operating within budget.

#### **EB Minute 24/14: Future Role of Expert Body**

It was noted that the reconstituted Body will not be fully considered until the Health Research Board review is completed. The status quo will remain until then. There will be a continuation of independent advice outside of the Department of Health in order to advise the Minister on all matters regarding fluoride and water fluoridation.

It was suggested that a change to the name of the body should be considered. The ‘Scientific Advisory Committee’ was suggested as being more appropriate. It was agreed by the Expert Body that the role of this ‘Committee’ is to advise rather than support the Minister for Health. It was noted that the focus will be regarding issues relevant to water fluoridation legislation.

It was noted that the Health Research Board’s Evidence Review will provide a definite search strategy and transparent tool regarding literature review.

It was noted that Health Intelligence, HSE, may have some input into the Quality Assurance Function of the Expert Body.

It was agreed that it is important that Irish Water are delivering the correct quality standards and it was noted that the Expert Body had developed the Code of Practice on the Fluoridation of Drinking Water to ensure these standards. It was agreed that operational matters should be monitored by the HSE. It was further agreed that scientific evidence regarding the standards should be provided by the Expert Body. It was noted that the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government

emphasised the need for Irish Water to be involved as the Water Authority to give advice on operational matters.

It was noted that there is one nomination so far from the HSE for the Communications Panel and that a further two are awaited for. It was suggested to widen the net for nominees and to approach the Faculty of Public Health Medicine, it was noted that the Department of Health will follow up on this.

It was noted by the Secretariat that there is currently a gap in scientific information, regarding water fluoridation, being communicated to the public.

### **EB Minute 25/14: AOB**

It was noted that changes have been made to the legislation regarding Freedom of Information.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 13.35pm.

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

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