

Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health held on Wednesday, 16th October 2013.

Present: Dr Seamus O'Hickey (Chairman), Mr Denis Lyons (Vice Chairman), Professor Denis O'Mullane, Professor John Clarkson, Dr Wayne Anderson, Mr Michael Kilcoyne, Mr Stephen McDermott, Mr Ray Parle, Bernadette McDonnell (representing Ms Teresa Cody).

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

Apologies: Mr Rowland Reece, Mr Luke Varley, Mr Gerry Flannery

EB Minute 18/13: Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were noted.

It was noted that Dr Joe Mullen has resigned as a member of the Expert Body due to his new appointment within the HSE.

It was noted that Dr Mullen had been a pillar of strength in the Expert Body and it was agreed to pass a vote of thanks in appreciation of all the work done by him.

It was further agreed to contact the Department of Health regarding a replacement as a public dental health representative is critical in relation to the quality and quantity of the membership of the Expert Body.

EB Minute 19/13: Minutes of the last meeting (26th June 2013)

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting on 26th June 2013 were agreed subject to minor amendments.

EB Minute 20/13: Matters Arising

It was noted that there is no update regarding the National Audit.

It was noted that the review of the Topical Fluoride Guidelines is delayed due to the high workload associated with the FACCT Study.

It was noted that the Expert Body had indicated its concern to the Minister for State, Alex White T.D. regarding the misuse of information in some schools concerning water fluoridation.

It was noted that a policy regarding fluoridation queries would be drafted.

EB Minute 21/13: Correspondence

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

It was noted that in response to a query from abroad regarding a report being circulated that this report - The Oireachtas (Joint Irish Houses of Parliament) Draft

report on Water Fluoridation in Ireland by Mr John Gormley in 2007 was not approved, endorsed or voted through by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Health and Children.

It was noted that a huge amount of time and effort is put into responses to queries for the public regarding water fluoridation and it was further noted that many of the same issues continue to resurface.

It was noted that it is not the role of the Expert Body or its members to promote water fluoridation and that it must remain independent.

It was noted that giving presentations to the County Councils was also causing difficulties regarding the independence of the Expert Body.

It seems that there is a public perception that the Expert Body's role includes the promotion of fluoridation when in fact it does not. It was noted that a similar debate took place in the UK 11 years ago and that 2 separate groups were set up to deal with this situation ó The British Fluoridation Society and the National Fluoridation Information Centre.

It was agreed that the Press Office within the Department of Health should deal with statements to the media.

It was agreed that no media interviews should be carried out by the Expert Body unless expert opinion in an independent manner is sought.

It was suggested that the Expert Body seek clarification from Minister White regarding the role of the Expert Body.

It was agreed that the work plan from the Expert Body should help to address some of these issues.

It was agreed that the Terms of Reference are as follows and should be included in the Expert Body Work Plan:

- 1 To oversee the implementation of the Recommendations of the Forum on Fluoridation on an ongoing basis.
- 2 To advise the Minister and to evaluate ongoing research on all aspects of fluoride including:
 - a. new emerging issues
 - b. its delivery methods as an established technology and
 - c. as required e.g. Agreed Programme for Government
- 3 To report to the Minister on matters of concern at his/her request or on own initiative.

EB Minute 22/13: Report of Sub-committees

The Quality Assurance Sub-committee reported the following:

- It was noted that correspondence from Mr Stephen McDermott to Mr Gavin Maguire, Assistant National Director Emergency Planning, HSE, August (correspondence 2nd August 2012 refers), regarding Recommendation 2 (Technical Aspects of Water Fluoridation) of the Forum on Fluoridation Report, is under consideration by the National Steering Group on Fluoridation.
- It was noted that the review of the Code of Practice by the QA Sub-Committee is in progress and near completion.
- It was noted that the QA Sub-Committee will contact the Public Analyst Laboratory regarding the Protocol for the Independent Testing of Hydrofluosilic Acid as part of the review of the Code of Practice.
- It was noted that the final draft Code of Practice will be circulated to all of the relevant stakeholders for consultation.

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

- An update was given regarding research presentations which have relevance for fluoridation and general health, and fluoridation and oral health in order to meet the requirements of Section 6 and 7 of the Health (Fluoridation of Water Supplies) Act 1960.
- It was noted that the Irish Longitudinal Study of Ageing and Health (TILDA) Study is an opportunity for strong evidence to support the argument either for or against water fluoridation in Ireland. It was noted that this study would also answer previous questions from the Green Party/Fianna Fail Programme for Government regarding the intake of fluoride.
- It was agreed that the Expert Body will recommend to the Chief Dental Officer that this study is carried out and advise that Minister White should be appraised of this.
- It was noted that the proposal by Professor Colman McGrath -Linking Population Oral Health and Oral Health Policy: GUI Studies to Inform Outcome of Government Health Policy on Water Fluoridation will be considered by the NEI Sub-Committee.
- It was noted that the EPA Advisory Committee have reported that the number of private wells will increase because of the introduction of water charges and that it is a general health concern because of septic tanks.
- It was noted that a major review on water fluoridation is being undertaken in Australia
- It was noted that the FDI will update its Position Statement on Fluoride.
- It was noted that the EPA is developing Research Strategy to include public risk perception regarding what might be a threat to public health. It was further noted that Public Health Medicine will mention fluoride in this regard.
- It was noted that there is international interest in developing Registers and collaborative databases on all general health matters.
- The importance of scientific peer review evidence was noted.
- It was noted that horizon scanning of literature must include grey papers

- It was noted the Expert Body contributed to a submission made to the Health Research Board regarding Systematic Review.
- It was noted that the HSE has agreed to provide spokespersons who will engage with the media when required, regarding water fluoridation.

EB Minute 23/13: Report of Executive Committee

The Report of the Executive Committee was noted.

It was noted that presentations had been given by Expert Body members to County Councils, the Fine Gael Health Committee and the Regional Health Forum South during June/July 2013.

It was noted that a delegation from the Expert Body met with the CEO and members of the Senior Management of Irish Water regarding water fluoridation.

A report was given by Ms Etain Kett regarding the review by the Tendering Committee for the supply and delivery of Hydrofluosilicic Acid (current contract due to expire in September 2014). It was further noted that a procurement process for the renewal of the contract will be put in place by the HSE.

Issues regarding dealing with queries from members of the public were noted and discussed. It was noted that Hot Press magazine has published further articles concerning water fluoridation.

It was noted that Secretariat Costs from May to September are in line with the agreed Budget for 2013.

EB Minute 24/13: Expert Body Work Plan

It was noted that this is an important document.

It was noted that the sections regarding the Forum on Fluoridation Recommendations and the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee are to follow. It was agreed to endorse the section regarding the New and Emerging Issues Sub-Committee (subject to amendments in the Training Section) and to submit it to Dr Dympna Kavanagh, Chief Dental Officer.

EB Minute 25/13: AOB

It was noted that the European Association of Dental Public Health Conference – The Mouth is the Mirror of the Body: Practical and Political Perspectives – was taking place in Malta 14th to 16th November 2013. It was noted that Dr Dympna Kavanagh would be attending this conference. It was proposed and agreed that Mr Stephen McDermott would attend on behalf of the Expert Body (subject to leave approval by the HSE).

It was noted that Ms Etain Kett would attend the seminar – Getting the information you need; the role of Open Access in health and wellbeing – co-hosted by the Institute of Public Health and the Regional Library, Dr Steevens Hospital, HSE.

It was noted that the Irish Division of the International Association for Dental Research will host its Annual Meeting 2013 at University College Cork.

It was noted that the World Health Organisation (WHO) publication 'Fluoride and Oral Health' should be published in the next six months.

EB Minute 26/13: Date of Next Meeting

The date for the next Plenary Meeting was agreed to be held between mid-February and mid-March 2014.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 13:15pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____