

Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health held on Wednesday, 18th June 2014

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

In attendance: From Secretariat: Ms Etain Kett, Ms Sandra Byrne

Apologies: Mr Luke Varley, Mr Denis Lyons (Vice Chairman), Dr Stephen McDermott

EB Minute 10/14: Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were noted.

EB Minute 11/14: Minutes of the last meeting (12th March 2014)

The minutes from the meeting of March 12th were agreed subject to minor amendments.

EB Minute 12/14: Matters Arising

It was noted that the Department of Health will contact the Minister for Education & Skills, Ruairi Quinn T.D. regarding information which is being made available in schools concerning water fluoridation.

It was noted that the water services function of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government will close in June 2014. These functions will move to Irish Water. It was further noted that the Department of Health met with Irish Water to update them on the Health Research Board review of water fluoridation in Ireland.

EB Minute 13/14: Correspondence

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

A PQ received on June 17th 2014 from Ms Clare Daly T.D. was noted.

A European Parliament Document relating to the EU Legislation on water fluoridation was brought to the attention of the Plenary by Mr Ray Parle. It was agreed that this was a very useful document and should be made available on the Expert Body Website.

It was agreed that there is a gap regarding the correct scientific information concerning water fluoridation reaching the public.

Regarding the campaign opposed to water fluoridation, it was agreed that it is important for the Expert Body to remain independent and to provide the science. It was noted that Department of Health are in the process of establishing a communications panel.

It was noted that there was a recent radio broadcast on 96fm in Cork featuring a discussion on water fluoridation with Professor William Reville, Professor of Biochemistry, University College Cork and Ms Aisling Fitzgibbon.

It was noted that there is still a high consumption of sugar and poor tooth brushing habits in Ireland.

It was noted that the Health Research Board review is looking at all the evidence regarding fluoridation.

It was agreed that the advice from the Expert Body to the Department of Health is that, based on current evidence, fluoride is safe and effective at the levels used in tap water in Ireland. It was noted that the Department of Health's policy on water fluoridation will not change unless there is evidence to support such a change.

EB Minute 14/14: Report of Sub-committees

The Quality Assurance Sub-committee reported the following:

- It was noted that the Code of Practice does not cover delivery of HFSA.
- It was noted that the National Steering Group on Fluoridation have not met since November 2013.
- It was noted that the budget allocation for water fluoridation by Irish Water has yet to be decided.
- It was agreed that a site visit to the suppliers of Hydrofluosilicic Acid will be arranged once the tender for the supply and delivery of it has been awarded. It was noted that it is important that the Hydrofluosilicic is sourced from a primary product. Regulations specify that the required concentration is 10.9% for Ireland.

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

- It was noted that ten 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.
- It was noted that Irish guidelines for fluoride toothpaste use for under 2 year olds differs from that of the U.S. It was agreed that it is difficult to measure a smear as recommended by the American Dental Association Council on Scientific Affairs. It was noted that the recommendations for Ireland will be reviewed when the results from the FACCT Study become available.
- It was agreed that *'The Economic value of Quebec's water fluoridation program'* Tchouaket et al 2013 was a very useful paper and looking at the

economic side of fluoridation would be a good strategy for the Department of Health.

- It was noted that *Water fluoridation for the prevention of dental caries (Cochrane Protocol)*. Iheozor-Ejiofor et al 2013 considers the effectiveness of water fluoridation.
- It was noted that Dr Seamus O'Hickey has written to the Oral Health Policy Academic Research Group indicating the importance of a paper for Ireland such as *'The Real Cost of Removing Water Fluoridation, A Health Equity Impact Assessment'* Wong, 2013.
- It was noted that TILDA and FACCT Studies are collaborating.
- It was noted that the World Dental Federation (FDI) an NGO of the World Health Organisation, is revising its policy statement regarding water fluoridation. The statement is currently in draft form but is expected to be approved in the next three months. The statement will be sent to 120 Dental Associations for their comment.
- It was noted that the NEI Sub-Committee did not find any evidence in the papers which it had reviewed to date that supported the claims of those opposed to water fluoridation. All peer-reviewed evidence will continue to be looked at but current evidence supports the policy of water fluoridation.

EB Minute 15/14: Report of Executive Committee

The Report of the Executive Committee was noted.

It was noted that there was no Expert Body representative at this year's annual conference of the European Association of Dental Public Health due to the constraints of a six month budget.

It was noted that funding will be confirmed for the remainder of 2014.

EB Minute 16/14: Future Role of Expert Body

A letter from Ms Teresa Cody, Principal Officer, Primary Care Division, Department of Health to Dr Seamus O'Hickey regarding the future role of the Expert Body was noted. Ms Cody advised the Plenary that the Minister for Health had considered the Work Plan of the Expert Body and the fact that most of the recommendations of the Forum on Fluoridation have been implemented but felt that it is very important to have an independent body outside of the Department of the Department who can advise the Minister on all matters regarding fluoride and water fluoridation.

It was noted that

- The Expert Body will remain in its current form until the end of 2014
- The future Chairperson will be from an academic, non-dental background
- The membership will be reduced and will have a more scientific focus
- Communications will not be a core function of the Expert Body but past contributions have been invaluable and the Department of Health recognises that this has put pressure on the Expert Body members.

- Recommendation 1 of the Forum of Fluoridation on Policy Aspects will be the responsibility of the Department of Health with the Expert Body giving advice.
- Recommendation 2 regarding the Technical Aspects will be a role for the HSE and Irish Water. The Department of Health feels it is appropriate for an audit to be carried out by The National Steering Group on Fluoridation.
- Recommendation 3 on Fluoride Toothpaste will fall under the remit of, the HSE lead, Topical Guidelines Review Committee.
- Recommendation 4 on the Oral Health Care Industry will also come under the remit of the Topical Fluoride Guidelines Review Committee.
- Recommendation 5 on Infant Formula - the Expert Body policy is in the public domain and will continue to be reviewed
- Recommendation 6 on Fluoride Research ó The Expert Body will continue to have a role in this along with the FACCT, TILDA and HRB Studies.
- Recommendation 7 on Education ó Information is available on the website. Issues relating to education will be considered by the Communications Panel.
- Recommendation 8 on Public Health ó Fluoridation will be integrated into the Oral Health Policy

Ms Cody advised that the Department of Health would welcome feedback from the members of the Expert Body regarding its future role.

The following were noted

- A change to the name of the body should be considered. The Scientific Advisory Committee was suggested as being more appropriate
- The Quality Assurance Sub-Committee is concerned about its future role and suggested that it is advantageous to have the Code of Practice developed outside of the HSE.
- The Food Safety Authority should have a role in the future group
- It was suggested that Irish Water should be involved in the future group.
- Fluoridation should be a component of the Oral Health Policy which in future should be linked to nutrition
- The Department of Health want a body rather than an ad hoc committee. It was agreed that it is very important to have a body with expertise, who politicians can go to for advice, outside of the Department.
- The Dental Health Foundation will continue in its role as Secretariat to the Expert Body.

It was further agreed that an Extraordinary Plenary Meeting will be held to specifically discuss this matter. This meeting will be scheduled before September.



EB Minute 17/14: AOB

It was noted that the Health Research Board has contacted the Department of Health to request the advice of the Expert Body regarding cross-sectional studies concerning water fluoridation. It was agreed that the Expert Body will provide a statement and will make papers on the topic available to the Health Research Board. It was noted that a response is required as soon as possible.

Professor Denis O'Mullane advised that the STROBE initiative has said that cross-sectional studies are a legitimate method.

It was noted that Professor John Spencer is giving a Keynote address at the International Association for Dental Research Conference in Cape Town and will discuss his study on this subject.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 13.13pm.

Signed: _____

Date: _____