

Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health held on Wednesday, 6th March 2013.

Present: Dr Seamus O’Hickey (Chairman), Professor Denis O’Mullane, Dr Wayne Anderson, Mr Michael Kilcoyne, Mr Denis Lyons, Mr Stephen McDermott, Dr Joe Mullen, Mr Ray Parle, Mr Gerry Flannery, Bernadette McDonnell (representing Ms Teresa Cody).

In attendance: From Secretariat: Ms Patirica Gilsenan O’Neill, Ms Etain Kett

Apologies: Mr Rowland Reece, Professor John Clarkson, Mr Luke Varley,

A minute’s silence was observed as a mark of respect for Mr Jack Bourke (former member of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health).

EB Minute 01/13: Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were noted.

EB Minute 02/13: Minutes of the last meeting (14th March 2012)

It was noted that the minutes of the meeting on 14th March 2012 were previously agreed by email so that they could be made publically available on the Expert Body website in November 2012. These were then signed by the Chairman.

EB Minute 03/13: Matters Arising

It was noted that Mr Michael Kilcoyne submitted his resignation as Vice-Chairman of the Expert Body.

It was proposed and agreed that Mr Denis Lyons would be Vice-Chairman of the Expert Body.

It was suggested that all Plenary members engage in sub-committees and that each member engage in at least one sub-committee. It was proposed and agreed that Mr Michael Kilcoyne would be a member of the New and Emerging Issues Sub-Committee and Mr Denis Lyons would be a member of the Executive Committee in his roll as Vice-Chairman of the Expert Body.

It was noted that cost restrictions in the public service made it difficult to have a second Plenary meeting in 2012. Additionally, the scheduling of a Plenary Meeting had also been postponed pending feedback in relation to the future role of the Expert Body from the Department of Health. It was agreed that Plenary meetings are extremely important for informing the public on matters regarding water fluoridation. It was proposed and agreed that three Plenary meetings will be held per year.

EB Minute 04/13: Correspondence

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

EB Minute 05/13: Report of Sub-committees

National Audit of Water Treatment Plants

It was further noted that all local authorities have carried out recommendations of the audit and that training has been undertaken since the audit.

It was agreed that representatives from the Health Service Executive (HSE), the Department of Health and the Expert Body will meet to discuss plans for publishing the report.

It was noted that once the report is released a media panel will be available to address queries from the public.

The Quality Assurance Sub-committee reported the following:

- It was noted that the National Audit of Water Treatment Plants is complete. It was further noted that the Expert Body is waiting to hear from the Department of Health regarding publication of the National Audit.
- It was noted that the review of the Code of Practice by the QA Sub-Committee has commenced.
- It was noted that inputs and comments were requested from relevant stakeholders and that some changes were drafted and that the work is ongoing.
- It was noted that the Public Analysts will report results to one decimal place to ensure uniformity in reporting and in order to take account of uncertainty of measurement.
- It was noted that international best practice is being referred to as part of the review.

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

- An update on the latest papers/documents reviewed by the NEI Sub-committee was presented to the plenary meeting. It was noted that approximately 29 papers had been reviewed since the last plenary meeting.
- It was noted that of these papers have relevance for all areas of medicine, not just fluoridation. It was further noted that this was a very interesting development and that it had possible implications for oral health.
- Details of conferences attended by the NEI Committee members were noted with significant papers or presentations being discussed.
- It was further noted that it is hoped that a paper regarding fluoride toothpaste and post-brushing rinsing will be published in June 2013.
- It was noted that Ireland does not fare well regarding frequency of brushing and that the sale of fluoride toothpaste is much lower than other parts of Europe.
- It was noted and agreed that the Expert Body is fulfilling its remit by having a constant overview of fluorides and general health through the NEI sub-committee which keeps itself informed of international developments and papers relating to fluoride.
- The importance of scientific peer review evidence was noted.

- It was noted that geomapping regarding water fluoridation is progressing.
- It was noted that The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) includes the effect of water fluoridation on aspects of general health.
- It was noted that the increasing use of social media has contributed to creating a new dynamic through which the public are accessing health information. It was further noted that there is potential to improve health literacy and knowledge through this use of social media but there is also a challenge in combating significant misinformation which is also being made available.
- It was noted that the Expert Body Appraisal of “*Human Toxicity, Environmental Impact and Legal Implications of Water Fluoridation*” (author Mr Declan Waugh) is available on the Expert Body website www.fluoridesandhealth.ie
- It was noted that a Resolution was passed by Seanad Éireann on Fluoridation on 30 January 2013:

“That Seanad Éireann

notes that water fluoridation is a major plank of public health policy in Ireland in the prevention of tooth decay;

notes that water fluoridation is recognised by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as one of 10 great public health achievements of the 20th Century;

notes that water fluoridation, at the optimal level does not cause any ill health effects to human health; but

notes also that fluoridation, and its effects on health and related matters, is kept under constant review”.

EB Minute 06/13: Report of Executive Committee

The Report of the Executive Committee was noted.

It was noted that Expert Body members with different expertise and experience are required to deal with a range of queries from members of the public. It was noted that the Expert Body has previously highlighted gaps in the membership of the Expert Body to the Department of Health. It was further noted that Expert Body had previously requested the Department of Health to appoint a Toxicologist to the Expert Body. It was proposed and agreed to co-opt a Toxicologist to the New and Emerging Issues Sub-Committee. It was proposed and agreed to write to the Department of Health requesting the membership of a Paediatrician on the Expert Body.

It was noted that the FSAI informed the Expert Body regarding a concerted campaign on water fluoridation. It was noted by the Expert Body that scientific information is being misquoted and that the public are being misinformed on matters relating to fluorides and health.

It was noted that some Expert Body members have been subjected to offensive comments from some members of the public. It was further noted that the Secretariat have received aggressive and intimidating phone calls and visits from some members of the public and that the Gardai have been informed of this matter.

It was agreed that the Department of Health will consult with its Press Office regarding these matters.

It was noted there serious inaccuracies had been published in Hot Press magazine in relation to water fluoridation. It was agreed to contact the Office of the Press Ombudsman in this regard.

It was noted that the role of the Expert Body is to inform the Minister for Health on all matters regarding water fluoridation. It was further noted that it is the role of the Expert Body to relay the facts regarding water fluoridation and not to promote it. It was further agreed that policy direction is the responsibility of the Department of Health.

It was proposed that a meeting be held with the Department of Health, the Chief Medical Officer, the National Cancer Registry, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland and the National Oral Health Lead, HSE.

It was noted that Minister White has been delegated responsibility for water fluoridation. It was agreed that the Expert Body would formally write to the Minister regarding its concern about the concerted campaign and its misuse of scientific information.

It was noted that there has been a high number of Parliamentary Questions regarding water fluoridation.

There has been a significant increase in the volume of queries from members of the public.

It was noted that Dr Joe Mullen had contributed significantly to addressing queries in relation to water fluoridation.

It was suggested that statements be obtained from other general health organisations in relation to specific public concerns regarding water fluoridation.

EB Minute 07/13: AOB

It was noted that an information document on water fluoridation was being drafted by the Secretariat for relevant stakeholders.

It was noted that Cork University and Dental School, University College Cork are celebrating its centenary throughout 2013.



EB Minute 08/13: Date of Next Meeting

The date for the next Plenary Meeting was agreed to be held 26th June 2013.

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 13:24pm

Signed: _____

Date: _____