

## Minutes of proceedings of the Plenary Meeting of the Irish Expert Body on Fluorides and Health held on Wednesday, 10<sup>th</sup> November 2015

**Present:** Dr Seamus O'Fliskey (Chairman), Mr Ray Parle, Ms Bernadette McDonnell, Professor Denis O'Mullane, Professor John Clarkson, Mr Stephen McDermott

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

**Apologies:** Mr Rowland Reece, Mr Michael Kilcoyne

### **EB Minute 10/15: Apologies**

Apologies for non-attendance at the meeting were noted. It was noted that the Department of Health would contact the Department of Environment regarding its representation.

It was proposed and agreed that Mr Ray Parle be Vice-Chair of the Expert Body.

### **EB Minute 11/15: Minutes of the last meeting (18<sup>th</sup> May 2015)**

The minutes from the meeting of May 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 were agreed subject to minor amendments.

### **EB Minute 12/15: Matters Arising**

It was noted that a link to images of fluorosis from the American Dental Association was made available on the website of the Dental Health Foundation.

It was noted that the Health Research Board have made its pronouncement in its detailed report Health Effects of Water Fluoridation . an evidence review 2015q it has found no definitive evidence that community water fluoridation is associated with negative health effects. It was further noted that the report did not address dental effects. It was agreed that a link to the HRB Report would be made available on the Expert Body website.

### **EB Minute 13/15: Correspondence**

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

It was noted that misinformation sent to all County Councils linking birth defects to dental fluorosis and water fluoridation could be worrying for members of the public.

### **EB Minute 14/15: 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.
- In the context of consideration of the future role of the Expert Body, 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 further amendments have been made to the draft Code of Practice in consultation with the Public Analyst regarding reporting of results, since the last Plenary Meeting.
- It was noted that a review of the Protocol on the Independent Testing of Hydrofluosilicic Acid (in order to consider the use of a tamper-evident bag during sampling as recently discussed at a meeting of the National Steering Group on Fluoridation, HSE) was also carried out in consultation with the Public Analyst. It was agreed that a risk exists that a sample could be tampered with subsequent to sampling and that the use of tamper evident bags will ensure that the sample is intact.
- It was noted that a site visit to suppliers of Hydrofluosilicic Acid in Spain had taken place in September and the visiting team (representing the Expert Body) to Derivados del Fluor believe the manufacturing process of Hydrofluosilicic Acid to be managed in a way that does not compromise the safety, quality or integrity of the Irish drinking water fluoridation programme.

It was agreed that the Plenary Members would be given two weeks to approve the Code of Practice and the Report of the Site Visit to the Supplier of Hydrofluosilicic Acid in Spain. It was further agreed that a copy of the report of the site visit could be given to Derivdos del Fluor.

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 review included the following papers:
- *'Association of dental caries with socioeconomic status in relation to different water fluoridation levels'*, Cho et al 2014

Overall this was a very poor quality paper and has nothing new in it to change current policies or practices.

- ***Water Fluoridation: A Critical Review of the Physiological Effects of Ingested Fluoride as a Public Health Intervention'*, Peckham & Awofeso 2014.**

This paper has nothing new in it to change current policies or practices.

- ***'Are fluoride levels in drinking water associated with hypothyroidism prevalence in England? A large observational study of GP practice data and fluoride levels in drinking water'*, Peckham et al 2015.**

This paper has been widely criticised since its publication, arguing that the findings were overstated and the study poorly designed. It was agreed that this paper does not impact on current practices or policies on water fluoridation.

- ***Dental Survey of the Adolescent at Gwangju-Si for Water Fluoridation'*, Park et al 2015**

The methodology used in this survey was not clearly described. It does not mention training or calibration of examiners and there was no evidence of controlling for confounders. It was agreed to check the status of water fluoridation in Korea. This paper does not impact on current practices or policies on water fluoridation in Ireland

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

The authors of the paper set out the actions for the UK government to improve oral health. The paper refers to the issues of access to services as well as prevention. It was agreed that some of these issues also affect the Republic of Ireland and that the paper should be brought to the attention of the Chief Dental Officer, Department of Health.

- ***'Community water fluoridation: attitudes and opinions from the New Zealand Oral Health Survey', Whyman et al 2015***

This paper looked at the levels of support for community water fluoridation in New Zealand, the study suggests further research is required to gain a greater understanding of health literacy about community water fluoridation.

- ***'US Public Health Service Recommendation for Fluoride Concentration in Drinking Water for the Prevention of Dental Caries'***

The US Public Health Services examined the prevalence of caries and recommends that levels of fluoride be amended to 0.7mg/l due to the increasing level of dental fluorosis. The earlier recommendation ranged from 0.7 . 1.2mg/L. It was noted that the Forum on Fluoridation made this Recommendation in 2002 in order to reduce exposure to fluoride by 20%.

- ***'Community water fluoridation and health outcomes in England: a cross-sectional study', Young et al 2015***

There was no strong evidence of an association between fluoridation and hip fracture, Down syndrome, all-cancer, all-cause mortality or osteosarcoma. Fluoridation was negatively associated with the incidence of renal stones and bladder cancer. It was noted that the study was funded by Public Health England, that it is well conducted and that geographical mapping was used. This study provides reassurance that fluoridation is a safe and highly effective public health measure to reduce dental decay. This confirms what has been established by the Health Research Board. It was agreed that this paper should be brought to the attention of the Department of Health.

- ***Timing of fluoride intake and dental fluorosis on late-erupting permanent teeth', Bhagavatula et al 2015***

This study looks at exposure to fluoride in older people. It was further noted that late erupting teeth may be susceptible to fluorosis. This does not change the advice regarding water fluoridation policy in Ireland.

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

Although this was a thorough and comprehensive paper, only three rats were included, hence extrapolation of the results to humans is not warranted. It was agreed that it should also be reviewed by a Nephrologist.

***Perceived safety and benefit of community water fluoridation: 2009 HealthStyles survey' Mork & Griffin 2015***

The results of this survey of a US adult population were similar to those found in the New Zealand survey (Whyman et al 2015). It was noted that perceptions regarding water fluoridation varied by knowledge of it and by socio-demographic factors and that oral health promotion messages should be tailored accordingly.

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

It was agreed that an expert in Health Economics would review this study.

***“Toothfriendly Guidelines, Children’s toothpaste. General provisions for the Toothfriendly certification of children’s toothpastes’, Toothfriendly International 2015***

The Toothfriendly logo is the trademark of the Toothfriendly International association. The logo is displayed on accredited products which meet specified quality criteria.

The Toothfriendly guidelines “*Children’s toothpaste*”, which was included in the reading list for the NEI October 2015 meeting set out the general

provisions for the Toothfriendly certification of children's toothpaste. These include:

- Provisions on the fluoride content (based on bioavailability of fluoride) and recommended conditions of use (which differ from the evidence-based guidelines from SIGN and PHE and the EAPD)
- Provisions on labelling
- Additional Provisions

This document is not evidence-based or of any particular relevance to the NEI or expert body, as it is not the role of the Expert Body to seek accreditation for products.

- ***'Green Paper: Fluoridation of Public Drinking Water', An update from the Joint Legislative Air and Water Pollution Control and Conservation Committee 2015 (USA)***

This paper is in Plain English and easy to understand. It was noted that it is stated that there are significant cost savings in water fluoridation and it was agreed that figures regarding both the cost of water fluoridation and cost of removing it should be updated for the Republic of Ireland. It was agreed that a Recommendation should be made for research in this area. It was noted that the Secretariat would check the website of the National Cancer Institute regarding fluoride studies that looked at population trends as well as studies that analysed bone tumours.

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

It was suggested that this paper should be brought to the attention of the Plenary Meeting and that the FAQ of the Expert Body be reviewed.

***'Kidney Health', The Center for Fluoride Research Analysis, 2012***

It was noted that Kidney Health states that the evidence supports the continued use of water from fluoridated community water systems for people both with healthy kidneys and those with kidney disease, for drinking water purposes.

- 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 Health Effects of Water Fluoridation has been published and there are no new or emerging issues contained in the Report. It was noted that HRB recommend that water fluoridation continue to be monitored.
- The Plain English Summary of the Cochrane Review of water fluoridation (2015) had caused confusion among non-scientists with the use of the word bias which has a particular meaning in the statistical sense. An amended version of the Plain English Summary has been published with the word bias omitted in addition to other changes.
- A paper is due to be published shortly regarding the Cochrane Review which includes a statement that cross-sectional studies should also be taken into account when reviewing the effectiveness of fluoridation programmes.
- It was noted that information received from the Centers for Disease Control and from Dental Public Health, Public Health England, regarding the use of orthophosphate in the treatment of public water supplies concluded that the addition of orthophosphate in the fluoridation process does not give rise to problems of fluorapatite. This information was sent to the HSE Drinking Water Group.
- A Pilot Project is being carried out in Limerick concerning Orthophosphate Dosing. It was agreed to seek an update regarding this Pilot Project



### **EB Minute 15/15: Report of Executive Committee**

The Report of the Executive Committee was noted.

It was noted that the Secretariat Costs for 2014 have been audited and that Secretariat Costs for the period January to September 2015 come within budget. It was noted that a new photocopier is required and approval was given to purchase one.

### **EB Minute 16/15: Future Role of Expert Body**

It was noted that the Department of Health consulted the Public Appointments Services (PAS) regarding options for advertisement concerning the appointment of a reconstituted Expert Body. It was noted that the PAS has recommended that as the Expert Body is not a state board that expressions of interest should be advertised on the Department of Health website.

It was noted that the Quality Assurance Sub-Committee were concerned that the future role of the Expert Body encompass the role of the Sub-Committee.

### **EB Minute 17/15: AOB**

It was noted that the Expert Body was very concerned at the serious inaccuracy of an article in Donegal Now 7<sup>th</sup> November 2015. "Fluoridation causes birth defects" It was noted that the Department of Health will get advice from its Press and Communications Office regarding this.

It was noted that the World Health Organisation publications "Fluorides and Oral Health" has been submitted to the publisher and that it is also being reviewed so that several papers may be published.

### **EB Minute 18/15: Date of Next Meeting**

The Chairman thanked all for their attendance and declared the meeting closed at 12:48pm. The date for the next meeting was suggested as Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016.

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

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