

www.worldactiononsalt.com

INSIDE:

- WASH News
- Latest Research
- International news
- WHO Initiatives

WASH NEWS

WASH member update

WASH now has 299 members. In recent months members have joined from countries including: Angola, Cuba, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, France, Gabon, Ghana, Italy, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa and the USA. All members are encouraged to invite further colleagues and supporters to join WASH by emailing their details to wash@sgul.ac.uk

To view an updated members list please visit:
http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/home/docs/wash_members.xls

World Salt Awareness Week

28th January -3rd February 2008

Early next year Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH), the UK division of WASH, will be holding its 9th annual National Salt Awareness Week (January 28th to February 3rd). The theme for the week will focus on the high levels of salt in foods aimed at children and the fact that children should consume even less salt than adults.

Widespread coverage of previous Awareness Weeks has been achieved in the UK media including newspaper articles, radio interviews, website features and web-chats.

For 2008 we would like members of WASH to support the Week by holding a similar event. Some proposed activities for the Week in the UK include: a survey of the salt content of foods aimed at children for release to the media; magazine articles targeted at parents; leaflets and information packs for health-care professionals so that they can hold local displays and events in health-care settings, and an annual lunchtime reception for MPs and key policy makers. Your events and messages could be

tailored to your own work and aims. We feel that a co-ordinated effort across a number of countries will immensely boost the message of the importance of reducing salt consumption. WASH members in the following countries will be holding an event: Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Canada and Poland.

Further information is available from WASH on request including:

- Advice on securing financial support
- Provision of planning notes
- Advice on press releases and presentation of data

Please email wash@sgul.ac.uk to register your involvement.

Launch survey update

Following the successful launch of WASH in October last year, we met with the Corporate Vice President of Worldwide Quality, Food Safety and Nutrition of McDonald's Corporation and the Senior Director of Communications and Government Relations of McDonald's Europe. Following this meeting, McDonald's have agreed to review the salt levels of their products internationally. This meeting was a direct result of the survey we published in October 2007, as part of the launch and indicates that WASH is being taken seriously by the industry. The survey also targeted Kellogg's, Nestle, KFC, Burger King and Subway and we will maintain the pressure on these companies to adopt an international salt reduction policy.

For more information on this survey visit http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/media/Media_coverage/Archive_Wash_Launch.htm

RESEARCH NEWS

Salt and children:

New research, published 7 September 2007 in The Journal of Human Hypertension shows that UK children and adolescents with higher salt diets have higher levels of blood pressure. The research, based on the data collected in the National Diet and Nutrition Survey for young people in Great Britain (NDNS), shows a significant association of salt intake with systolic blood pressure after adjusting for age, sex, body mass index and dietary potassium intake. This paper achieved a huge amount of International media coverage (accessible in the media section of WASH).

For the full paper, please visit:

http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/media/docs/children_ndns_uk/salt_bp_children_jhh.pdf

Salt policy update:

The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) has recently published a commentary on the current recommendations relating to salt in the U.S., and policies in other countries, as a continuation of the AMA's efforts to impact salt/sodium policy:

<http://jama.ama-assn.org/cgi/content/full/298/12/1439>

Long-term salt reduction reduces the risk of cardiovascular disease

A long-term intervention study has found that reducing sodium intake may reduce the long-term risks of cardiovascular disease. The study examined the effects of reduction in dietary sodium intake on cardiovascular events in over 3,000 subjects using data from two completed randomised trials, TOHP I and TOHP II. The original trials included one group of 744 participants (TOHP I) and another of 2382 participants (TOHP II) aged 30-54 with pre-hypertension who were randomised into a sodium-reduction intervention group and a control group for 18 months or 36-48 months respectively. The intervention group received comprehensive education and counselling on reducing sodium intake.

The follow-up observational assessment, 10-15 years after the original trial, found that net sodium reductions in the intervention groups were 44mmol/24 hr and 33mmol/24 hr respectively. Furthermore, follow-up information on morbidity found that the risk of cardiovascular events was 25% lower among those in the intervention group, and 30% lower after further adjustments for baseline sodium excretion and weight. Therefore, reducing salt intake by 2.5g of salt can reduce the risk of having a stroke or heart attack by one quarter.

CASH issued a comment on this research which received a large amount of media coverage.

Reference: Cook NR et al. Long term effects of dietary sodium reduction on cardiovascular disease outcomes: observational follow-up of the trials of hypertension prevention (TOTP). *BMJ*, Apr 2007; 334: 885; doi: 10.1136/bmj.39147.604896.55

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IN BRIEF

MALAYSIA: The Health Ministry plans to label food products to help consumers identify healthy food items. Health Minister Datuk Dr Chua Soi Lek said healthy foods would carry a healthy-choice food logo if their sugar, salt and fat content were at healthy levels. "Amendments to existing food-related regulations will be made to allow manufacturers to make appropriate advertisements on their products".

ASIA: Research published by the Asia-Pacific Cohort Studies Collaboration (APCSC) in the *Journal of Hypertension*, highlights the immense impact that blood pressure-lowering strategies could have in Asia. Researchers used recent data on hypertension from more than half a million adult participants to determine the risks for heart disease and stroke attributable to hypertension.

The author, Dr Martiniuk, stated: "There is little doubt that salt is the leading cause of high blood pressure in the area. Salt consumption in China, particularly Northern China, is among the highest in the world. Efforts to restrict its addition to food

and as a storage medium in parts of Asia would help in reducing its role in increasing hypertension."

NETHERLANDS: In The Netherlands a task force has been set up to lower the salt content of food products, receiving substantial media coverage. Additionally, The Netherlands are requesting clearer labelling with recent research demonstrating that Multiple Traffic Lights are more helpful to consumers. The research is to be published shortly.

FINLAND: The National Public Health Institute of Finland will soon have the latest salt consumption statistics available, based on 24-hour urine collections in representative population samples.

The Ministry of Health, together with the Public Health Institute, is attempting to get EU approval for continuation of the current Finnish salt labelling legislation, which has proved to be very effective in limiting excessive intake of salt. The legislation is applied to all the food item categories which make a substantial contribution to the salt intake of the Finnish population. Foods that are high in salt are required to carry a "high salt content" warning if the salt content is more than 1.3% in bread, 1.8% in sausages, 1.4% in cheese, 2.0% in butter, and 1.7% in breakfast cereals or crisp bread.

BANGLADESH: On May 13, 2007 the Hypertension Committee of the National Heart Foundation arranged a conference on "Salt and Hypertension" to create awareness among the

public, attended by leading food and health representatives. A proposal for government is being developed to reduce salt consumption.

A conservative estimate shows that about 15 million adults in Bangladesh are suffering from high blood pressure. Data on salt intake in Bangladesh is scarce; the salt industry estimates that average salt consumption is 15g per day. However this is a crude estimate, only taking into account the volume of production and sales of salt producers. Prof. R.K. Khandaker and his team are undertaking an ambitious and important programme to estimate salt intake in the Bangladesh population and its relationship with hypertension.

JAPAN: The Working Group for Dietary Salt Reduction of the Japanese Society of Hypertension has prepared an English version of the Working Group Report, consisting of two papers: (1) Rationale for salt restriction and salt-restriction target level for the management of hypertension, and (2) Assessment of salt intake in the management of hypertension. Both papers are soon to be published in October issue of Hypertension Research, the official journal of the Japanese Society of Hypertension.

FRANCE: The Ministry of Health are in charge of the national campaign for promoting better nutrition, Le Programme Nationale Nutrition-Sante (PNNS). The campaign is continuing until 2010, and the salt issue will be considered in 2008/2009.

POLAND: The Polish Society of Hypertension is undertaking a number of initiatives concerning salt consumption in Poland. The official statement of the Polish Society of Hypertension, concerning the need for reducing the amount of salt contained within processed foods, has been published in the official journal *Arterial Hypertension*. The statement has already been publicised via local television in Krakow.

IRELAND: The Food Safety Authority of Ireland (FSAI) announced progress on its salt reduction programme with the food industry, highlighting specific developments by food manufacturers including meat products; bread; soups and sauces; breakfast cereals; snack foods and caterers. There are currently 75 food businesses and their representative groups participating in the FSAI salt reduction programme (compared with 52 in 2005).

Link to full report:

http://www.fsai.ie/news/press/pr_07/pr20070919.asp

PAKISTAN: The Pakistan Hypertension League is holding its 11th Annual Symposium, 27-28 October 2007, at Quetta, Pakistan. Dr. Syed Ali Raza Kazmi will be representing and raising awareness of WASH by presenting a Paper on the role of salt in hypertension to the leading consultants and doctors of Pakistan.

Latest Canadian research

The recent issue of Statistics Canada's Health Reports Journal published a report that suggests

among people aged 19 to 70; over 85% of men and 60% of women eat salt in amounts that far exceed the recommended upper limit. The study used data from the 2004 Canadian Community Health Survey, and found that the average for all Canadians was 3,092 mg of sodium a day (8g salt), one-third more than the maximum recommended amount of 2,400 mg sodium (6g salt). Even young children consumed too much, children aged one to three averaged close to 2,000 mg (5g salt) a day in 2004.

Health Canada's 'Food Guide', a basic education tool that is designed to help Canadians follow a healthy diet, sent a strong message about the health risks associated with over-consumption of salty foods and the impact on public health, says the Scientific Director of the Canadian Stroke Network. The 'Food Guide' called on Canadians to limit their intake of salt and to read food labels carefully. It recommended that consumers select foods low in sodium and prepared with little or no added salt. The Canadian Stroke Network (CSN) is working with other national organizations to raise awareness about the dangers of excessive sodium consumption and it has advocated these 'Food Guide' changes.

For more information, see

www.canadianstrokenetwork.ca

Update from AWASH, the Australian division of WASH

AWASH is planning a series of initiatives for World Salt Awareness Week. The Chair of the

UK Food Standards Agency, Dame Deirdre Hutton, will be in Sydney making the keynote speech at this event to ensure that the issue of salt reduction stays high on the public agenda

AWASH is focusing on the development of a comprehensive 5-year strategy for working with the food industry to reduce salt in processed foods including:

1. High level commitment from the food industry as a way of securing cross-industry action and providing top-down support for individual company policies
2. Individual company agreements and action plans negotiated through a programme of meetings
3. A programme of technical support, including provision of guidance documents and, if feasible, direct exchange of technical expertise
4. A high profile media strategy and programme of work to raise consumer awareness and promote good progress by the food industry
5. A comprehensive programme to monitor progress

AWASH is strengthening support from government. Margaret May, MP Federal Member for McPherson tabled a Motion in the House of Representatives calling on the government to educate consumers about the danger of high salt diets in recognition of the serious adverse effects of salt on health.

For further details see www.awash.org.au

WHO INITIATIVES

Salt Action Network

The aim of the network is to share experiences on salt reduction efforts, provide background information and act as a resource for technical expertise between the 11 member countries (Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Ireland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Spain). The network is led by the United Kingdom, via its Food Standards Agency and aims, in time, to become the centre of expertise for salt reduction.

EU Platform for Action – Diet, physical activity and health

Under the leadership of the European Commission, this platform has been created for EU members to pledge concrete actions with the aim of containing, or reversing the current obesity trend. Salt intake is the first issue to be addressed on the agenda, due to the successes already achieved by members. The platform has released its 2007 annual report, detailing the Platform's ongoing actions:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/nutrition/platform/docs/synopsis_commitments_2007_en.pdf

WASH are always interested in salt research, if you have any new reports you would like us to promote, contact wash@sgul.ac.uk

For further information contact:

WASH, Blood Pressure Unit, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace,
London SW17 ORE

Tel: 0208 725 2409 • Email: wash@sgul.ac.uk

www.worldactiononsalt.com

Katharine Jenner, Editor