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WASH NEWS

WASH offers a warm welcome to our new members. Recent publicity for World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) following World Salt Awareness Week and a letter in *The Lancet* has seen the WASH membership increase to 315 members from 73 countries. We are pleased to welcome all new members, and encourage WASH members to spread the invitation to their international contacts and colleagues.

Email 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 2008

World Action on Salt and Health successfully launched its first World Salt Awareness Week 2008, reflecting the UK theme of Salt and Children. At least 21 countries took part in this event, a remarkable achievement for our first year. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the success of the Week including: Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, India, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Portugal, Serbia, Turkey, UK and US.

Spotlight on UK's Salt Awareness Week

WASH launched its 9th National Salt Awareness Week focusing on salt and children, highlighting the large amounts of salt that children are eating. A media release was issued during the Week highlighting that many foods eaten by UK children still contain large amounts of salt, in some cases more than half the daily maximum limit for a 6 year old in a single serving. The media release also revealed the results of research carried out with Netmums, a leading parenting website, showing that many parents are confused about

salt. CASH achieved widespread coverage across press, radio, TV and online. CASH also had a big increase in support from health professionals with nearly 300 supporting events being held throughout the country.

On the 30th January a lunchtime reception for 100 guests was held at the House of Commons.

Speakers at the reception included Mrs Dawn Primarolo, Minister of State for Public Health, Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman of CASH, Ian Reynolds, Deputy Chair of the Food Standards Agency and Cathy Court, Director of Food and Nutrition, Netmums.

Spotlight on Australia’s Salt Awareness Week

Australia World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) involved scientific experts, political representatives and the food industry in World Salt Awareness Week. Activities included holding a conference, at which Dame Deidre Hutton, Chairperson of the UK’s Food Standard’s Agency was a speaker, asking for reduced salt in foods and improved food labelling. The press release achieved publicity with radio, press and TV interviews.

Spotlight on Georgia’s Salt Awareness Week

Georgia, represented by WASH member Dr Dali Trapaidze, held a very productive World Salt Awareness week event, undertaking many activities which achieved high media awareness throughout the country including:

1. A conference discussing behavioural stereotypes, nutritional health and hypertension.

2. Education interventions in schools
3. Receiving funding from Nikora (school meals manufacturer) and McDonald’s.
4. Creation of posters and guides.
5. Pilot study of children 11-16 years old for appearance of hypertension, educational focus groups and questionnaires.

Example of publicity materials in Georgia:



Summary

Several issues were brought to light by the Week, such as the need for clearer food labelling; measurement of salt intake; higher awareness of the dangers of salt. A full review and evaluation of World Salt Awareness Week can be found at: http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/awareness/wsaw_evaluation_2008.htm

RESEARCH NEWS

Research into salt and obesity in children

New research published in *Hypertension: Journal of the American Heart Association* showed that UK children and adolescents who eat less salt drink fewer sugar-sweetened soft drinks and may significantly lower their risks for obesity, elevated blood pressure, heart attack and stroke later-in-life.

Previous studies have shown that dietary salt intake increases fluid consumption in adults, but this study is the first to examine whether the same is true in children. The research, based on the data collected in the National Diet and Nutrition Survey for young people in Great Britain (NDNS), showed a significant association between salt intake and total fluid, as well as sugar-sweetened soft drink consumption.

Dr. He, one of the authors said “Not only would reducing salt intake lower blood pressure in children, but it could also play a role in helping to reduce obesity.”

http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/media/salt_soft%20drink_hypertension_2008.pdf

Research into hypertension in the developing world

Research published in *The Lancet* (May 2008) has provided further evidence that high blood pressure is becoming a global epidemic, concluding that 80% of deaths worldwide related

to high blood pressure occur in developing countries. The research also found that half of the burden of stroke and heart disease was attributed to lesser degrees of high blood pressure, which would be missed by many prevention and treatment strategies for the hypertensive.

http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/evidence/docs/thelancet_hypertension_05.08.pdf

Salt reduction – cost effective chronic disease prevention

The Lancet (Dec 2007) published research demonstrating that that salt reduction is equally as effective as tobacco control in preventing chronic disease, and that the associated costs are much less for salt reduction. This research, in line with the WHO global goal to reduce death from chronic disease, modelled the effect of salt reduction and tobacco control on 23 countries of low income and middle-income. The model showed that over 10 years, these two interventions could avert 13.8 million deaths at a cost of US\$0.40 - US\$1 per person per year. Therefore, salt reduction strategies could substantially reduce mortality and make a significant and affordable contribution towards preventing chronic disease.

http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/publications/journals/chronic_disease_prevention.pdf

World Health Statistics 2008

The World Health Statistics report, published in May 2008 by WHO from 193 Member States, has shown that heart disease and stroke have taken

over from infectious diseases as the leading causes of death around the globe. The director of the WHO department of Health Statistics and Informatics *stated* “*We tend to associate developing countries with infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. But in more and more countries the chief causes of death are non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease and stroke.*”

<http://www.who.int/whosis/whostat/2008/en/index.html>

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

IN BRIEF

AUSTRALIA:

Research commissioned by The George Institute for International Health in Sydney, surveying over 1,000 people, showed that more than three quarters were worried about the amount of salt in their diet, but most have no idea how to work out the sodium content in the foods they eat due to confusion over food labels. This news story achieved excellent newspaper coverage for AWASH (Australia World Action on Salt and Health).

BANGLADESH:

Researchers in Bangladesh undertook a cross-sectional study to understand the knowledge, attitude and practice relating to salt intake in hypertensive patients compared with that of non-hypertensive individuals.

http://www.worldactiononsalt.com/awareness/world_salt_awareness_week_2008/evaluation/bangladesh_paper.doc

CANADA: A federally appointed working group in Canada are proposing to adopt a version of a

new British salt-reduction strategy that has already begun to show results. According to Statistics Canada, 85 per cent of Canadian men, and 60 per cent of women, consume sodium above the upper daily limit of 2,300 milligrams. The overseeing Working group includes Kevin Willis and Prof. Norm Campbell.

CHINA: China has introduced new voluntary guidelines for nutrition labelling on packaged foods, in a bid to prevent the government imposing stringent regulations in the future. All foods carrying nutrition labels will have to convey levels of sodium per 100g or per serving, and as a percentage of the nutrient reference value (NRV).

FINLAND: Finland, which has aggressively reduced salt in food over three decades, has seen a 40-per-cent decline in average sodium intake. That has helped produce a large reduction in average blood pressure levels and an 80-per-cent drop in deaths due to stroke.

FRANCE: WASH member Pierre Meneton, a researcher for the National Institute of Health and the National Institute of Health and Medical Research in Paris, France, and an active campaigner for the reduction of salt intake, was cleared of charges of defamation. The case was brought against him after commenting in an interview in 2006; “The lobbying of salt producers and agribusiness is very active. It misinforms health professionals and the media”. Due to the very large media publicity around this affair, the

French food sector is moving faster on the issue of salt reduction.

<http://www.prwatch.org/node/6949>

NEPAL: Research from the Nepal Hypertension Society has shown that the prevalence rate of hypertension in the same rural community of Nepal has increased by three times in the last 25 years. Multivariate logistic regression analysis for risk factors showed that hypertension is significantly associated with salt intake, sedentary habit, obesity and alcohol intake but no significant correlation was found with tobacco use. Comparison of the risk factors between the two periods showed that salt intake and obesity were the main culprits for this increase.

SLOVAKIA: Stefan Farsky, Chairman of Slovak League against Hypertension has shared press material from their press conference (further details available on request):



SPAIN: WASH spokesperson Josep Redon shared the work of WASH, including previous work and future perspectives, at the Meeting of the Spanish Society of Hypertension.

UNITED KINGDOM: The UK Food Standards agency will be discussing the lessons learnt from eight education projects that have been run throughout the UK by the FSA's partners, including the British Heart Foundation and the Food Commission. The main aim of the projects was to convey, in local or community settings, the salt campaign's national messages. The projects range from initiatives targeted at peer educators and young parents, to a project working with housing association staff and residents.

WASH is awaiting the results of a FSA-funded 24-hr urinary sodium survey, assessing the impact of the '6g a day' salt reduction intervention on population intake. The 6g target was set by the FSA to be achieved at the end of 2010.

UNITED STATES: The Food and Drug Administration launched a petition to revise the regulatory status of salt (currently 'Generally Recognised as Safe') and establish food labelling requirements. WASH members were urged to comment resulting in fantastic support for the petition across the world.

WHO/EU INITIATIVES

Global health strategy

WHO met with Member States to develop an action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. One of the objectives planned is to enact or strengthen legislation to support the healthier composition of food products, by reducing salt levels.

Salt Action Network

The Network was formed with the aim of developing an expert base to share information, identifying best practice on communication messages and engaging with industry, and developing consensus on legislation. The network is led by the UK's Food Standards Agency, current members include; Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Finland, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, Sweden and UK.

EU food labelling rules

On 30 January 2008, the Commission adopted a proposal for a draft regulation on the provision of nutrition information to consumers. WASH are delighted that the European Commission has proposed that all food manufacturers selling pre-packed food in the EU will have to declare the salt content of their foods on the front of pack. This means that food producers will no longer be able to hide the amount of salt they have added to their products. The regulation will be directly applicable in all Member States.

Significant changes include the consolidation and simplification of existing legislation and the introduction of mandatory nutrition labelling for pre-packed foods.

The proposal is the first step in negotiating new regulations. The first Council Working Party was held on 27 March 2008 under the Slovenian Presidency, with discussions expected to begin in summer 2008. The new Regulation is not expected to be in force before 2010/11. Further information can be found on the Food Standards Agency website at: <http://www.food.gov.uk/foodlabelling/ull/labellingproposals/>.

WASH urge all food manufacturers to adopt one method of labelling to maximise benefit for consumers, as salt per portion with agreed standardized portion sizes rather than salt per 100g.

For further information contact:

WASH, Blood Pressure Unit, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace,
London SW17 0RE

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

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Katharine Jenner, Editor