



Submitted via E-mail: November 6, 2012

I am writing on behalf of the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) to express concerns regarding the composition of the Committee on Consequences of Sodium Reduction in Populations.

In particular, the current composition is heavily weighted with individuals who have actively supported population-wide salt reduction in the public record on multiple occasions. While expressing such a belief is itself not problematic, it would present the appearance of a conflict of interest for a member of a committee charged with “evaluating... approaches that have been used to assess the relationship between sodium and health outcomes.” That is, they have already expressed their views on the subject on numerous occasions, and thus are unlikely to be perceived as totally objective. For example:

- At least nine of the ten committee members are current or recent recipients of federal funding for projects that involve issues linked to lower sodium intake or are directors of research programs that have a focus involving low sodium diets.
- Eight of the ten committee members have recent scientific publications or were involved in previous IOM reports which endorse low sodium diets.

Given that of primary interest to the committee are the potential benefits or adverse effects of sodium reduction in population subgroups, such as those with hypertension, pre-hypertension, chronic heart failure, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, and congestive heart failure, it is essential to have committee members with clinical expertise in these areas. We are concerned with the apparent lack of diversity in the committee members’ scientific and medical expertise. The committee roster currently appears to have no representation in the areas of clinical cardiology or diabetes. Further, it appears that eight of the ten proposed members are primarily involved in or trained in epidemiology, an over-representation that may not be appropriate for the questions to be addressed.

In closing, the American Society for Nutrition (ASN) hopes that the IOM will re-examine the composition of this important committee to ensure a fair and balanced multidisciplinary group representative of all necessary clinical areas, which we believe will help to resolve the ongoing confusion related to sodium consumption. ASN would be happy to assist the IOM in identifying unbiased candidates. ASN is highly supportive of the work of the IOM, and we remain hopeful that we will be able to endorse the resulting work of this committee, as we have other IOM nutrition-related endeavors.

Sincerely,

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