

ASN Advisory Committee on Ensuring Trust in Nutrition Science
CALL NOTES
Wednesday, May 25, 2016

Bert Garza, Chair
Carol Tucker-Foreman
Catherine Woteki
Michael McGinnis
Eric Campbell
Robert Steinbrook
Sylvia Rowe
Ed Cooney
Patrick Stover, ex officio
Sarah Ohlhorst, staff

Chair Bert Garza welcomed the committee and reviewed the call agenda: review April 25th meeting summary notes; review report outline; update from Patrick Stover on literature reviews; and update from Sarah Ohlhorst on case studies.

Meeting Summary Notes

The Advisory Committee approved the summary notes as is, and agreed that all summary notes should be posted online for transparency. Sarah Ohlhorst will send a link to the Advisory Committee page within the ASN website, where the summary notes are posted.

DRAFT Report Outline

When reviewing the draft report outline, committee members questioned bullet #5 – Holding Others Accountable. Committee members foresee problems with trying to apply the best practices they will develop to other organizations and the media. While committee members would like to see the best practices put to use by others beyond ASN, the issue is with actually holding others accountable; not the application of the best practices. Many felt discomfort with broadening the best practices beyond ASN and questioned what obligation ASN has, if any, to ensuring others are adherent to the best practices. The committee agreed that language would be added to the preamble statement that among the Advisory Committee’s goals is holding the field to the highest standards. Bullet #5 will be replaced in the outline.

The conversation touched on the lack of new federal funding for nutrition research. Explaining the current research funding environment and the need for more resources from multiple sources will be included under bullet #3 – Players and Actors in Nutrition and the Food System and the Need for Multisectoral Engagement in Nutrition Research -with an emphasis on increasing public-private partnerships (PPPs) to increase overall research funding, as well as collaborations. It is important to note where the investments in nutrition research are coming from and what the money is being spent on. The framework will be as follows: 1) recognize legitimate reasons that academia, industry, government, etc. (all funding sources within nutrition research) each fund or perform research; 2) describe current trends where research is performed with regards to nutrition; 3) emphasis on PPPs. Public good is an essential goal for PPPs in nutrition research - some explicit precautions must be included when establishing PPPs as well.

Also under bullet #3, non-government organizations will be included as a new bullet. NGOs include ASN, American Cancer Society, American Public Health Association, Pew Charitable Trusts, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and many others, including international agencies such as the International Food Policy Research Institute. NGOs have a vested interest in nutrition research funding as well.

Conflict of interest is missing from the draft report outline and will be added under bullet #4: Roadmap for Engagement: Best Practices for Science, Scientists and Scientific Societies to Establish Credibility and Effectiveness in Promoting Public Health and Public Trust.

Also under bullet #4, scientific rigor is a big role for journals and government agencies, in addition to ASN. The report should touch on funding agency responsibility vs. scientific/professional society responsibility. Everyone must contribute in their own sphere of expertise.

Communication Literature

Patrick Stover reached out to Bruce Lewenstein, Professor of Science Communication at Cornell University, to set up a general discussion on why some sources of information are more trusted than others. Bert Garza is planning to have a call with Bruce Lewenstein in the near future. Dr. Lewenstein shared resources that may be of use to the committee. We will share those documents with a stronger evidence-base with the Advisory Committee. We will wait to see what evidence supports this discussion before adding this topic as an additional bullet.

Bert Garza found a study on general principles for communication of stem cell research. While stem cell research is not applicable to the work of the Advisory Committee, the general principles may be of use. He will share with the Advisory Committee members prior to the next conference call.

Lit Review Update

Access to libraries is an issue for ASN that was slowing them from doing systematic reviews. Cornell University has good graduate students who will work with ASN staff and the Advisory Committee to find and assemble this material. A graduate student interested in this topic will do the lit reviews for the Committee's report. Patrick Stover is not certain if this work could sync with their thesis or if their thesis would surround this work solely. Cornell also has a dedicated librarian for systematic reviews and a librarian through the arrangement they have with Cochrane. These individuals could assist the grad student with the systematic reviews.

Update on Case Studies

Sarah Ohlhorst described 4 case studies that ASN has prepared – one or more case studies may be used as sidebars in the final report. Three of the case studies involve professional societies that are involved with nutrition research, and one of those case studies explores ASN. The Advisory Committee agreed to proceed with the case studies as described by Sarah Ohlhorst.

Next Steps

Sarah Ohlhorst will send the revised report outline to the Advisory Committee at least one week prior to the next call – Monday, June 20th at 1:00pm Eastern. Bert Garza noted that he hopes all

committee members can join that call, but that comments on the report outline, etc. via email to Sarah Ohlhorst are also acceptable since we recognize not everyone can join every call.

The call adjourned at 2:59pm.

ADDENDUM:

Input has been received from various Advisory Committee members following the May 25, 2016 conference call. Please view notes from these conversations below:

- Add another section to the outline that presents a PR and action plan.
- The report's primary audience is likely to be other professionals, yet our intent is to enhance public trust. Thus our report likely would be enhanced significantly if it included a PR plan for ASN's consideration with articulated goals and timeframes directly relevant to the public.
- The report likely also would be enhanced if it includes an action plan of steps ASN can take over the short-, medium- and long-term designed to enhance public trust (either directly or by working with other stakeholders), understanding that the committee's input is advisory to ASN's board.
- There are two important "audiences" for this report – the public and industry. What does this mean to industry? We need to include a message to them as a key audience.
- What can science and academia do to simplify good choices for responsible consumers? How can we help consumers understand better from what is not so good? What are the markers to look for?
- Simple curriculum is needed as PR to educate consumers. Tell them where the best sources of information are; is the label consumer friendly? Consumers get asymmetric information (all science speak). Communication is needed to make food and nutrition decisions simple for trust. We want people to make sensible choices; not have ambiguous information.
- The bins in the infographic need to be sharpened to develop operating guidelines; specificity and simplicity. Are the audiences the same for each bin?
- Industry has standards; review these and develop rigorous standards for academia.
- Make industry accountable for full disclosure. Need a guiding table with boxes that need to be checked off for industry; this is how they operate.
- Talk to Access to Nutrition Index (ATNI). Global food companies are ranked for responsible nutrition focus – <https://www.accesstonutrition.org/>
- Need to engage industry, not mandate or they will outspend you and try to neutralize you. The Grocery Manufacturers Association is very powerful, so engage them. Tap into Irene Rosenfeld, etc. and let them react – what do they want from PPPs; principles?
- Arrange a round table of the CEOs from top 15 leading food companies. Do this earlier on in the process before the report is set; they will meet on this topic.