

COMMITTEE ON CARCINOGENICITY OF CHEMICALS IN FOOD, CONSUMER PRODUCTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Minutes of the meeting held at 10.00 am on Thursday 21st March 2024 by Teams.

Present

Chair: Professor D Harrison

Members: Mr A Bhagwat
Dr R Dempsey
Dr R Haworth
Prof G Jenkins
Ms J Rix
Dr L Stanley

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| Secretariat: | Miss B Gadeberg | UKHSA Scientific Secretary |
| | Dr D Gott | FSA |
| | Mr T Fraser | UKHSA |
| | Ms C Mulholland | FSA |
| | Ms C Potter | FSA |

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| Assessors: | Ms A Adjei | MHRA |
| | Ms F Hill | DBT-OPSS |
| | Dr V Swaine | HSE |
| | Mr N O'Brien | VMD |

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| Invited Experts and Contractors: | Dr R Bevan | IEH Consulting |
| | Dr J Doe | |
| | Professor J Weeks | IEH Consulting |

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| Officials: | Dr B Doerr | FSA |
| | Ms H Jones | DBT-OPSS |
| | Mr H Mayes | UKHSA |
| | Ms S Pallavi | UKHSA |
| | Dr P Paramasivan | HSE |

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ITEM 1: Announcements and apologies for absence

1. The Chair welcomed Members, and other attendees to the meeting. Apologies were received from Prof N Pearce, Dr M Cush, and assessor Dr O Sepai (UKHSA).
2. Members were reminded to declare any interests they may have in an item before its discussion.

ITEM 2: Minutes of meeting held on 20th July 2023 (CC/MIN/2023/02)

3. The first draft minutes were agreed. It was noted that the discussion with respect to lung cancer and air pollution was being picked up by COM.

ITEM 3: Matters arising

Interim position on hydroxyanthracene derivatives

4. The COC interim position on hydroxyanthracene derivatives (HADs) had been approved by the Chair and was awaiting publication.

COT 2023 workshop on Future principles and guidelines

5. The report from the COT workshop in 2023, which had been attended by a number of COC Members, had been published on the COT website:
<https://cot.food.gov.uk/COTseminarsandjointmeetings#evolving-our-assessment-and-future-guiding-principles-workshop-17th-may-2023>.

ITEM 4: COC workshops follow up – proposal for new guidance statement (CC/2024/01)

6. Dr Dempsey noted that she has worked on the topic area, including with Dr John Doe on materials being presented in Item 7; it was agreed that Dr Dempsey could fully participate in the discussion.
7. This paper provided a draft proposed new guidance statement “A case for change – developing a better approach to assessing risk of cancer from chemicals” as a follow up to the two COC workshops held in November 2022 and November 2023, along with draft summaries of these workshops.
8. Members discussed whether the document should be considered guidance or a COC position. It was considered that it would have more weight as guidance and better encourage development in the field, as guidance was considered to be more likely to be picked up by industry and technical audiences.
9. One challenge was to convey in the document that there is a continuum of risk with respect to carcinogenicity rather than a binary approach of chemicals either being a carcinogen or not. It would be important to be clear that effective hazard identification and risk assessment is critical for determining the potential for carcinogenicity associated with exposure to a chemical.

10. It was agreed that the document would be further developed into guidance, as a call for evidence, and the aim would be to finalise a document in a timely manner to support development of better and safer assessment of risk of cancer from chemicals, without being too prescriptive and definitive which would take a longer period of time to develop and agree.

ITEM 5: Review of Guidance Statements – discussion

11. The Chair noted that much of the Committees current work was considering guidance as there had been relatively few referrals for topics in the past few years. The Secretariat (FSA and UKHSA) noted that the COC guidance underpins the risk assessment approaches used both in responding the food and public health incidents and enquiries. In addition, the COC guidance underpins policy and regulation of specific compounds.

12. Members noted that it would be helpful to have further feedback from Government Departments and Agencies on the utility of the COC guidance statement series. In particular, details on how the guidelines are used and any identified gaps would enable the Committee to ensure that any updates will be relevant.

13. It was agreed that options to restructure the guidance statements would be considered, for example simplifying the documents and having more detailed supporting evidence reviews underpinning the documents.

14. The Secretariat would engage with Assessors in Government Departments and Agencies to investigate the use and utility of the COC guidance statement series. In addition, as COT was starting to consider its guidance, linking in with both COT and COM guidance while retaining flexibility was important.

ITEM 6: Horizon Scanning (CC/2024/02)

15. Professor Jason Weeks joined the meeting and gave a short summary presentation on the discussions to date around horizon scanning, in particular from the joint COC-COM session in October 2023.

16. Members discussed the amount of input required to undertake the horizon scanning to balance the need for horizon scanning and prioritisation while not becoming a heavy burden on resource and Committee time.

17. It was noted that the suggested approach for horizon scanning would search wider than the peer-reviewed literature to bring insights from elsewhere to consider for prioritisation. In addition, Members were reminded that they can also raise insights to the Secretariat to also feed into the process.

18. It was agreed to take forward exploring the insights further, while progressing the Committee's ongoing work on development of the COC guidance.

ITEM 7: Presentation: Revised strategy for the assessment of Chemical Carcinogenicity – John Doe

19. Dr John Doe joined the meeting to present on a paper he was preparing on a revised strategy for assessment of chemical carcinogenicity.

20. The presentation outlined the caveats with the current approach with respect to the adequacy of the animal studies conducted and the need to move to a graded rather than a binary outcome to carcinogenicity assessment. A framework for evidence evaluation was presented, and a matrix of potential outcomes suggested. Examples were provided indicating that removing data from the two-year bioassay and also human epidemiological data on cancer still provided sufficient information to support decision making on the potential for cancer.

21. It was noted that this presentation by Dr Doe had been separated from the proposed new COC guidance statement as the material being prepared by Dr Doe would be material that could be submitted as part of the COC call for evidence to address the challenge.

22. Members welcomed the presentation of this strategy alongside case examples of chemicals to demonstrate how a different approach could be utilised in practise. Suggestions were made with respect to possible further improvements which could include consideration of how a margin of exposure approach would look without two-year rodent bioassay data. It was noted that there was a benefit in the approach with respect to drawing in mechanistic, in vitro, in silico and toxicokinetic data into the assessment approach.

23. Dr Doe was thanked for his presentation, and it was agreed the Secretariat would circulate the draft paper supporting the presentation to Members for information.

ITEM 8: Annual Report (CC/2024/03)

24. The Annual Report had not been prepared in time for the meeting, and it was anticipated it would be circulated to Members for comment by correspondence.

25. Members were requested to provide updates to their affiliations and declarations of interest to sit alongside the annual report.

ITEM 9: Appraisals

26. Members appraisal forms had been circulated, and Members were requested to complete and return them to the Secretariat for onward distribution to the Chair. As required or requested, one-to-one discussions between the Chair and Members could also be set up. It was noted that appraisals were not only useful to the individual but were a means to improve the Committee's overall performance.

ITEM 10: Any other business

COC Recruitment

27. Members were informed that the advert for new COC Members was still open with an extended deadline of 16th April 2024.

Dr David Gott

28. Members were informed that Dr David Gott would be retiring from the FSA at the end of June 2024. Dr Gott was thanked for his service as part of the FSA Secretariat and wished a happy retirement.

ITEM 7: Date of next meeting

29. The next meeting would be held on 18th July 2024 and was anticipated to be a virtual meeting, which would be confirmed nearer the time.