

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

Minutes of the meeting held at 10.00 am on Wednesday 30th July 2025 by Teams.

Present

Chair: Professor D Harrison

Members: Dr E Barnes  
Mr A Bhagwat  
Dr J Doe  
Prof. Þ I Halldórsson COT epidemiologist – co-opted to COC  
Dr S Stalford  
Rev. Prof. L Stanley

Secretariat: Ms B Gadeberg UKHSA Scientific Secretary  
Ms C Mulholland FSA Scientific Secretary  
Mr T Fraser UKHSA Administrative Secretary  
Ms S Pallavi UKHSA  
Ms C Potter FSA

Assessors: Ms A Adjei MHRA  
Ms H Jones OPSS  
Mr H Mayes OPSS  
Mr N O'Brien VMD  
Dr O Sepai UKHSA  
A Slack HSE

Officials: Dr C Beevers COM member  
Dr L Peppin HSE  
Ms K Webster HSE  
Mr J Smith HSE

Invited Experts and Contractors:  
Mr P Watts Bibra  
Ms B O'Connell Bibra (Items 1-3)  
Mr D Threlfall Bibra  
Mr C Waine Bibra (Items 1-3)

Observers: None

Contents		Paragraph
Item 1:	Announcements and apologies for absence	1
Item 2:	Minutes of meeting held on 13th March 2025 (CC/MIN/2025/01)	7
Item 3:	Matters arising	8
Item 4:	Carcinogenicity of talc according to the GB CLP Regulation: an introduction (CC/2025/03)	11
Item 5:	OECD new draft Test Guideline – ToxTracker assay (CC/2025/04) ents	18
Item 6:	COM QSAR Statement (CC/2025/05)	30
Item 7:	Horizon scanning (CC/2025/06)	36
Item 8:	Any other business	41
Item 9:	Date of next meeting	42

## **ITEM 1: Announcements and apologies for absence**

1. The Chair welcomed Members, and other attendees to the meeting. Apologies were received from Members: Dr M Cush, Dr C Harris, Ms J Rix and Prof G Jenkins (COM Chair), and from Prof N Pearce who had been invited to support the work on talc (Item 4) and Ms F Hill (OPSS Assessor) who was represented by Ms H Jones and Mr H Mayes.
2. The Committee was informed that recruitment for a COC Chair and COC Members was ongoing and the adverts had been extended further into the summer. Members were encouraged to share the vacancies with their contacts.
3. Rev Prof Lesley Stanley was congratulated on her appointment as COT Chair.
4. The Secretariat announced that Bibra had been awarded the contract for UKHSA Committee Secretariat support provision following an open tendering process. Bibra shared a short presentation about the organisation with the Committee.
5. The Committee was informed that Mr Tom Fraser would be taking up a new role in UKHSA and therefore this was his last meeting as COC Committee Administrator. Members were requested to ensure all correspondence was sent to the COC mailbox.
6. Members were reminded to declare any interests they may have in an item before its discussion.

## **ITEM 2: Minutes of meeting held on 13th March 2025 (CC/MIN/2025/01)**

7. The first draft minutes of the March 2025 COC meeting were agreed.

## **ITEM 3: Matters arising.**

### ***Publications***

8. The COC Guidance Statement G11 “A case for change: the challenge to develop a better approach to assessing risk of cancer caused by chemicals” had been published. It had been shared with the COT and Expert Committee on Pesticides at their recent meetings, and HSE had been informed of the publication. The British Toxicology Society had also been updated as they had been in correspondence with the Chair and Secretariat about this document previously. The Secretariat was intending to inform other chemicals committees and relevant Government Departments and Agencies in the coming months at appropriate opportunities.
9. A COC member who had been working on information relevant to the call would go ahead with a formal submission in response to the call for change.

10. The Committee considered it would be helpful to have some publicly accessible materials prepared to aid dissemination. It was agreed that a small group of expert and lay COC members and the Secretariat would discuss options for further dissemination to the scientific community and the public in the coming months.

**ITEM 4: Carcinogenicity of talc according to the GB CLP Regulation: an introduction (CC/2025/03)**

11. Drs Meera Cush and Caroline Harris, who were unable to attend the meeting, had declared interests for this item. Dr Cush is undertaking work relating to the assessment of talc, and the company Dr Harris is employed by has undertaken work on assessing the health risks of talc. It had been agreed that they would not participate in discussion on talc.

12. Dr Emma Barnes declared that talc has registered uses as an agrochemical and has uses in agrochemical products.

Post meeting note: While Dr Barnes participated in this introductory discussion, it was subsequently agreed that they would not participate in further discussions on talc.

13. Professor Þórhallur Ingi Halldórsson was welcomed to the COC; he has been co-opted to the Committee to provide epidemiological expertise to support the COC assessment of talc.

14. The paper presented provided an introduction on to the GB CLP Regulations, classification criteria for carcinogenicity, and the EU considerations of talc with respect to carcinogenicity. The paper was provided in advance of HSE requesting input from COC on talc, due to the timescales involved once the EU Committee for Risk Assessment (RAC) opinion is published.

15. Dr Lindsay Peppin (HSE) presented in further detail on the processes and timelines involved in GB CLP regulations. The recently published assessments of talc by RAC and IARC were briefly described.

16. HSE were anticipating seeking input from the COC at the November 2025 meeting on the evidence base on talc to support its assessment for GB CLP, for example with respect to considering the quality of individual studies or the strength of evidence for carcinogenicity.

17. Materials relating to talc would be circulated to Members in advance of the November meeting, when the detailed discussion of this topic would progress.

**ITEM 5: OECD new draft Test Guideline – ToxTracker assay (CC/2025/04)**

18. Dr Susanne Stalford declared an interest as their employer had a scientific collaboration with Toxys, who are the developer of the ToxTracker assay. It was

agreed that Dr Stalford would not participate in the discussion of the assay, but could remain in the meeting.

19. Dr Emma Barnes declared an interest as their employer was a user of the ToxTracker assay but was not involved in validation of the assay. It was agreed that Dr Barnes could contribute to discussion but not in framing any COC conclusions.

20. The paper presented provided the draft new Test Guideline for the ToxTracker assay, which the COC, and COM, has previously discussed, along with a peer review report, and updated validation report for the assay. COC had been invited to comment on the draft new Test Guideline, to support the UK National Co-ordinator to the OECD Working Group of National Coordinators of the Test Guidelines Programme (WNT).

21. Members were informed that they could also make individual comments through the public consultation link shared during the meeting.

22. The Committee made a number of general observations. It was noted that the peer review report had raised a number of points it would be useful for the draft Test Guideline to address, in particular on the sufficiency of statistical validation, concern that the data were not fully presented as raw data were not available, and concerns that chemicals with clear positive or negative responses had been selected leading to high sensitivity and specificity. The COC recommended exploring further chemicals without clear findings to demonstrate the potential value of the assay.

23. It was noted that while presented as NAM, it was not a non-animal method as it required fetal calf serum and porcine skin gelatin.

24. One of the potential limitations of the assay was lack of metabolic activation of the cell lines reducing any improvement of the assay beyond existing methods, e.g. bacterial cells in the Ames test.

25. The Committee had commented previously that the assay used were murine cell lines rather than human cell lines. It was additionally noted that differences in behaviour of Nrf2 in mice and humans brings a limitation to the aspects of the assay relating to Nrf2.

26. Members commented on the acceptability criteria and interpretation, suggesting that comparisons be made with other in vitro genotoxicity assay. Caution was advised with respect to setting overly tight requirements, e.g. the negative control had to fall within the historical control data.

27. It was agreed that the assay was useful in providing mechanistic evidence of genotoxicity in particular when a standard assay had produced a mixed or difficult response.

28. More detailed comments from the Committee included, that the introductory paragraphs had not clearly explained the purpose of the assay, that the assay used stably-transfected cell lines, and that it used six independent cell lines and the

potential for this being a source of variability and uncertainty, though possibly less than if it was based on a single multi-functional cell line.

29. It was agreed that COC comments from this meeting would be collated and then circulated to the Committee Members for comments and agreement, before being shared with the UK National Coordinator in time for their deadline in early September.

#### **ITEM 6: COM QSAR Statement (CC/2025/05)**

30. Dr Susanne Stalford declared that their employer provides QSAR models. It was noted that Dr Stalford's appointment to the COC had been made specifically because of expertise in this area and as such Dr Stalford could fully participate in the discussion.

31. The paper presented the final draft of the COM statement on quantitative structure-activity relationships (QSAR) to predict genotoxicity, and invited the COC to consider any steps that COC should take following the COM's work.

32. Dr Carol Beevers (COM) and Dr Ovnair Sepai (COM Scientific Secretary) gave a presentation on the COM statement and focussed on Figure 1 of the statement. This flagged important aspects such as considering the questions to be addressed or regulatory purpose, considering what models are available and whether they can address the question, and the users expertise in understanding and interpreting the results. The statement also considers integrating with the overall genotoxicity assessment approach.

33. It was noted that the statement was framed as a preliminary stage of a genotoxicity assessment, but there was recognition of wider use also as potential future COM work, e.g. within an integrated approach to testing and assessment or in early development of analogues. The COM had also recognised while in a regulatory context QSAR was predominantly in use in the context of impurities, there was scope for wider use. Some suggestions were made around incorporating multiple models for multiple results, which also would increase confidence, however there was recognition of variability of requirements across other guidance so COM had not wanted to be prescriptive.

34. In terms of work for COC, it was recognised that it would be useful to consider guidance for wider carcinogenicity assessment, considering the broader types of target endpoints, but likely to need more caution than was the case for genotoxicity guidance. COC would likely consider this in the context of wider data sets, as well as supporting analogue selection in read-across, or supporting choice of assays to undertake.

35. Overall, it was agreed that the COC should consider in the future where QSARs would sit in the context of carcinogenicity and how they are complementary to other assessments.

**ITEM 7: Horizon scanning (CC/2025/06)**

36. No interests were declared.

37. The COC had been considering the process to undertake horizon scanning and at the March 2025 COC meeting, it had been suggested to tabulate the items of interest along with updates on the status of the different topics. This paper presented a draft table based on the insights identified in the horizon scanning activities in 2023-2025, along with suggestions from the March 2025 meeting.

38. The COC proposed taking forward chemical hair relaxers, which is a topic of interest to the public. It was recognised that there might not be much evidence available, but it would be good to review. It was noted this had been of interest in the 1990s when there were concerns regarding use of hydroxides and irritancy leading to potential for scalp damage.

39. The Committee suggested using headings with the table to differentiate topics that are being progressed, topics that are not being pursued, and topics that might be revisited. While it was noted that horizon scanning has been undertaken for many years and possible topics go back in time, it was agreed that the table would capture recent suggestions only and updates on status would be from 2025 onwards.

40. It was suggested that the horizon scans should be shared with the COC sister committees, COM and COT, for awareness of what is on the horizon, and also to allow clarity on the remit of each Committee for different items.

**ITEM 8: Any other business**

41. No other items of business were raised.

**ITEM 9: Date of next meeting**

42. The next meeting would be held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2025, likely as an in person meeting.

43. While a placeholder for a meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> September to discuss talc had been circulated, it was agreed this was not appropriate timing for the topic and would be removed.