

6th July 2017



‘MICRONUTRIENTS AND HEALTH’ APPG MEETING EXPLORES NURTITIONAL ISSUES AND IMMUNITY FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The fifth meeting of the ‘Micronutrients and Health’ All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), the Secretariat for which is managed by the Health Food Manufacturers’ Association (HFMA), was held on Tuesday 27th June at Portcullis House in Westminster, where MPs, stakeholders and industry professionals gathered to explore the topic of nutritional issues for older people.

Chaired by Rosie Cooper MP, the meeting focused on ‘Nutritional issues in older people’ with the aim to raise awareness and lobby effectively for better-targeted guidance on nutrient intakes for the elderly, by engaging with UK Department of Health and other stakeholders.

Thought-provoking presentations were led by Dr Catherine Hankey, Senior Lecturer in Human Nutrition, University of Glasgow, who shared insights into the highly concerning issue of malnutrition and low micronutrient status of older people. Despite being low in micronutrients, obesity leading to chronic disease is an issue in some older adults, and may justify weight management in this group of adults to maintain their activity and mobility. Dr Hankey, who is a State Registered Dietitian, also explained her own research work on improving the dietary intake of under nourished older people in residential care homes. Dr Hankey discussed poor nutrient intake and increased sarcopenia (muscle loss) which in turn increases the risk of inactivity in the elderly, and also cited evidence that 80% of men and 89% of women who leave a care home to live independently are clinically low in vitamin D as a result of being confined indoors.

Philip Calder, Professor of Nutritional Immunology within Medicine at the University of Southampton then explored the growing issue of immune decline in older people. Professor Calder warned of the stark decrease in immune competence with age, explaining why this rapid decline in immune system function occurs in many older people. Low protein, vitamin B and E, iron and zinc intakes result in a higher risk of infections and even poor response to vaccinations compared to those with adequate intakes.

Both Dr Hankey and Professor Calder discussed the very wide-ranging beneficial impact of improving the micronutrient intakes of older people, examining how the intake of improved levels of vitamins and minerals in their daily diet could have major implications for their independence and quality of life.

HFMA Chair Robert Taylor said, “We were honoured to welcome Dr Hankey and Professor Calder to share their insights and research into the issue of nutrition and immunity for older people. The

importance of micronutrient intake in the elderly just can't be ignored, as was made obvious during both of their presentations. What is most concerning is that much of this research has been known for decades and not effectively acted upon. There is now a critical need to apply what pressure we can to focus on preventing the alarming consequences of low micronutrient intake in our elderly population.”

The APPG, which is chaired by Rosie Cooper MP, was inaugurated in 2016 and aims to promote awareness and understanding, and to help form strategies in Parliament, of the vital role of micronutrients in helping people to be healthier. The group has previously held four successful meetings on the subjects of Pre-Conception Nutrition, Improving Teenage Nutrition, The Global Burden of Chronic Disease, and Nutrition and Healthy Ageing of the Brain.

The HFMA is delighted to be continuing to support the APPG in a secretariat capacity in the new Parliament. This meeting also served as the AGM for the APPG where officers were formally re-elected.

For more information on the All Party Parliamentary Group for Micronutrients and Health please contact appg@hfma.co.uk

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Issued on behalf of:
Issued by:
Press enquiries:

HFMA
Pegasus
Vicky Flannigan or Lucy Williams on 01273 712 000 or
vflannigan@thisispegasus.co.uk

The HFMA

The Health Food Manufacturers' Association (HFMA) is the voice of the UK's natural health industry and represents more than 125 manufacturers and suppliers of natural health products.

Founded in 1965, the HFMA is a not-for-profit organisation which operates long-standing codes of practice to ensure that member companies adhere to high standards and offer good quality, safe products supported by responsible, lawful information.

For further information about the HFMA, visit www.hfma.co.uk.