

29TH MARCH 2018



'MICRONUTRIENTS AND HEALTH' APPG MEETING EXPLORES CLAIMS FOR FOODS, MICRONUTRIENTS AND CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

The first meeting of 2018 for 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 20th March in the Palace of Westminster. Parliamentarians, stakeholders and industry professionals gathered to explore the topic ***'Good for your heart? Claims for foods, micronutrients, and cardiovascular health'***.

Introducing the meeting, new APPG Chair **Carolyn Harris MP** said, *"Cardiovascular, that is heart and circulatory, disease (CVD) causes more than a quarter of all deaths in the UK, that's over 150,000 deaths each year, an average of 420 people each day or one death every three minutes. This meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss this vital public health challenge, and emerging research on the central role of nutrition and micronutrients in relation to cardiovascular health."*

Leading the presentations was **Professor Julie Lovegrove**, Director of the Hugh Sinclair Unit of Human Nutrition, and Deputy Director of the Institute for Cardiovascular and Metabolic Research at the University of Reading. She argued that CVD can be effected for the better by improved diet, and shared insights into the impact of flavonoids on cardiovascular health and the importance of increasing fruits and vegetable intake in the population. Studies show that high intakes of flavonoids can improve vascular health and reduce platelet aggregation supporting reduced CVD risk.

The next speaker was **Professor David Richardson**, a specialist in nutrition and food science who currently holds a Visiting Professorship at the University of Reading, School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy. Throughout his talk, David focused on the scientific substantiation of health claims on foods in Europe, with particular attention to cardiovascular health. In breaking down the extensive and costly process that companies are faced with when applying for health claims through the European Food Safety Authority, Professor Richardson highlighted recent success stories in the area of cardiovascular health, citing water soluble tomato extract, which had been shown to help maintain a healthy blood flow, and oat beta glucan, which lowers blood cholesterol in relation to reduced risk of heart disease.

Responding to a question from the floor about whether health claims help sell foods or not, Professor Richardson said: *"of products I have worked on, I would say there has been a beneficial effect not only on physiology and preventing disease but also on the market place as well."*

Summarising both presentations, Chair Carolyn Harris urged the group to press for further recognition of the many foods that contain different bioactive compounds, as well as the micronutrients and other compounds such as flavonoids, which are associated with a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease. She also suggested that, following the group's earlier meeting on Nutrition and Healthy Ageing, a future APPG meeting might

focus on the role of supplementation in reducing the cost burden for the healthcare system, and achieving this through increased awareness for supplementation of the diet with key micronutrients – particularly for at-risk groups.

HFMA Chair Robert Taylor said, *“We were honoured to welcome Professor Julie Lovegrove and Professor David Richardson to share their insights into the issue of nutrition for cardiovascular health. The mortality rates cited by Carolyn Harris at the start of the meeting show that it is critical that associations like ours continue to work to raise consumer understanding of the nutritional interventions which can be so easily applied to help alleviate the pressure on the NHS.”*

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



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Chair: Carolyn Harris MP

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