

25TH JULY 2018

‘MICRONUTRIENTS AND HEALTH’ APPG MEETING EXPLORES POTENTIAL HEALTHCARE COST SAVINGS FROM FOOD SUPPLEMENTS

The second 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 3rd July in Portcullis House, Westminster. Attendees came together to explore the topic **‘Healthcare Cost Savings from Food Supplements’**.

Introducing the meeting, the APPG Chair **Carolyn Harris MP** observed, *“I don’t think anybody will have missed the recent news headlines on the future of NHS funding, and the Prime Minister’s £20bn NHS funding pledge. The potential cost-savings to the National Health Service arising from people having healthy diets cannot be ignored. It is therefore vitally important to encourage people to keep themselves healthy and educate people about the critical role that good nutrition plays in this. This is key in ensuring that we can address future chronic conditions and longevity challenges, and relieve the strain on the National Health Service at a time of challenging economic and financial circumstances.”*

Leading the presentations was **Dr Michele Sadler**, a Registered Nutritionist with over 30 years’ experience, with positions as Senior Nutrition Scientist at the British Nutrition Foundation (1993-1997) and Programme Manager at the Institute of Grocery Distribution (1997-2000).

In her presentation, Michele spoke of her peer-reviewed paper published in the International Journal of Food Sciences and Nutrition, in which she carried out a systematic review of studies into the potential cost benefits derived from supplementation. Michele highlighted that spending on chronic diseases is expected to double in the next 15 years - for example, a third of 65+ year-olds and half of 80+ year-olds fall at least once per year resulting in injuries and fractures that are estimated to cost the NHS £2billion per year and to account for over 4 million bed days annually. Yet vitamin D supplementation has been shown to reduce falls in older people, with potential cost savings to the NHS.

The next speaker was **Mark Monahan**, a research fellow in the Health Economics Unit in the Institute of Applied Health Research at the University of Birmingham. Mark’s presentation focused on the potential health and economic benefits of iodine supplementation in iodine-deficient pregnant women. Based on research indicating that iodine supplementation could potentially increase a child’s IQ by 1.22 points, his department’s research has shown potential cost savings to the NHS of £199 and to society of £4,476 per pregnant woman.

All Party Parliamentary Group – Micronutrients and Health
Chair: Carolyn Harris MP

Secretariat (provided by the Health Food Manufacturers’ Association)
c/o Philippa Williams, 1 Wolsey Rd, East Molesey, Surrey KT8 9EL

Tel: +44 (0)20 8481 7100, E-mail: appg@hfma.co.uk, Web: www.micronutrientsappg.org



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Summarising both presentations, Chair Carolyn Harris urged the group to continue to find ways to raise the profile of Michele Sadler's review, and the many other helpful studies in this area. She added that some of the individual nutrients discussed, for example, Mark Monahan's illuminating data relating to the significant benefits of correcting iodine deficiency in pregnancy, and Michele's comments about vitamin D and falls, might be an appropriate subject for a future meeting of this group.

HFMA Chair Robert Taylor said, *"The need to tackle rising healthcare costs and generate efficiencies within the NHS has been widely discussed and continues to be a complex issue. This meeting has shown that some of the relatively simple dietary measures outlined could result in hugely significant healthcare cost savings for the NHS, for example those indicated by Mark Monahan equate to over £600m annually for iodine deficiency in pregnant women alone. This is in addition to the obvious human and societal benefits of better health, including improved birth outcomes and higher infant IQ, with benefits spanning a whole lifetime."*

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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Issued on behalf of:

Issued by:

Press enquiries:

HFMA

Pegasus

Vicky Flannigan or Jonjo Murphy 01273 712 000 or

victoria.flannigan@thisispegasus.co.uk or Jonjo.murphy@thisispegasus.co.uk