

MINUTES
Interagency Committee on Human Nutrition Research (ICHNR)

August 26, 2021
2:30 pm – 3:30 pm

Location: ZoomGov videoconference

Welcome & Introductions: Dr. Rachel Levine, Assistant Secretary for Health, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Mr. Hubert Hamer, Acting Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)

Opening remarks highlighted guiding principles and priorities for the co-chairs, including:

- Health equity should underscore activities; addressing health disparities and access to proper nutrition is important
- The need for nutrition and diet-related surveillance
- The importance of community communication and education

1. Summary of GAO Report Scope, Findings: Co-Executive Secretary Dr. Christopher Lynch, Acting Director, Office of Nutrition Research, National Institutes of Health

The GAO report, “Chronic Health Conditions – Federal Strategy Needed to Coordinate Diet-Related Efforts” (GAO-21-593), has been prepared, prompted by Congress asking for a review of 1) diet related chronic health conditions, and 2) federal efforts to address them. A draft has been shared with agency leads, including certain ICHNR members, and the final publication is anticipated to be released in September 2021. The GAO reported that multiple agencies with varying missions and jurisdictions have coordinated many efforts to improve Americans’ diet and health but found them to be “fragmented” across agencies, GAO recommends increased coordination across agencies and suggests Congress should consider identifying and directing a federal entity to lead the development of a federal strategy for directing diet-based efforts to reduce risk of chronic health conditions.

2. Proposed ICHNR Response to the GAO Report: Dr. Christopher Lynch,

A Congressional report accompanying FY21 appropriations calls for ICHNR to convene a meeting within 30 days of the GAO report release to “address any shortcomings identified by GAO in how the various federal agencies and departments currently collaborate and utilize federal resources to reduce and eliminate diet-related chronic disease,” and to provide a briefing to Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate within 60 days of the GAO report release.

A review of the draft GAO report does not appear to identify specific shortcomings within federal agencies. Comment on the establishment of a federal entity to lead efforts was deemed outside the purview of ICHNR. Nonetheless, the GAO report is an opportunity for ICHNR to reflect on activities and coordination. ICHNR is committed to improving collaboration.

Discussion on possible ICHNR response areas:

- Leveraging existing collaborative committees may be a good strategy. Examples include the NIH and USDA-NIFA dietary biomarkers research, and HHS and USDA-NASEM Standing Committee on Evidence Synthesis and Communications in Diet and Chronic Disease Relationships.
- Enhancing collaboration on DRIs was suggested. Chronic disease endpoints could be considered where applicable, and there could be development of a continuous process to update DRIs.
- Enhancing collaboration on dietary guidance was suggested. Development of clinical guidance for diet related chronic diseases such as obesity and type 2 diabetes was mentioned.
- Greater leverage of public-private partnerships was proposed.
- Opportunities for implementation science research on food assistance programs and access could be explored.
- Improved transparency and communication for ICHNR was suggested.

Action Items:

- ICHNR response topic areas may cover how collaboration is currently conducted and how it will be enhanced, how reporting via ICHNR can be enhanced. Response will be needed within 60 days of GAO report release.

3. Discussion: Co-Executive Secretary Dr. Pamela Starke-Reed, Deputy Administrator, ARS, USDA

Discussion focused on ways collaboration across agencies can be enhanced. Members offered their perspectives on shared interests and successful strategies.

Action Items:

- A subcommittee will be established to draft the ICHNR response to the GAO report, led by Jackie Haven and Janet de Jesus. Volunteers should send applications to them via email.
- ICHNR meetings will be held quarterly moving forward.

Adjournment

ICHNR 08/26/2021 Meeting Attendance

Co-Chairs

- Rachel Levine, Assistant Secretary for Health (HHS)
- Hubert Hamer, Acting Under Secretary, Research for Education, and Economics (USDA)

Officers

- Pamela Starke-Reed, USDA, ARS (Co-Exec Sec)
- Christopher Lynch, HHS, NIH (Co-Exec Sec)

HHS

- Paul Reed, OASH / ODPHP
- Elisabeth (Lis) Handley, OASH
- Janet de Jesus, ODPHP
- Carter Blakey, ODPHP
- Rachel Fisher, ODPHP
- Dana DeSilva, ODPHP
- Julia Quam, ODPHP
- Katrina Piercy, ODPHP
- Susan Mayne, FDA, CFSAN
- Robin McKinnon, FDA, CFSAN
- Claudine Kavanaugh, FDA, CFSAN, ONFL
- Namanjeet Ahluwalia, CDC, NCHS
- Jennifer Seymour, CDC, DNPAO
- Meredith Morissette, HRSA, MCH
- Jill Reedy, NIH, NCI
- Kimberly Barch, NIH, ONR
- Karen Regan, NIH, ONR
- Adam Kuszak, NIH, ODS
- Katherine Oh, CMS

USDA

- Cindy Davis, ARS
- Jackie Haven, CNPP
- Stephanie Fu, CNPP
- Jessica Larson, CNPP
- Joanne Guthrie, ERS
- Jay Variyam, ERS
- Suzanne Stluka, NIFA

DoD

- Karl Friedl, USARIEM
- Patricia Duester, USUHS

VA

- Anne Utech

USAID

- Ahmed Kablan
- Andrea Warren

NIST

- Laura Wood