

## ***World Salt Awareness Week 2008 Evaluation***

World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) launched its first World Salt Awareness Week on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> January – Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2008, focusing on Salt and Children.

We are proud to say that 21 countries took part in this event, a huge achievement for our first year. We are grateful to all those who contributed to the success of World Salt Awareness Week including: Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, India, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, UK and the US.

### **Aims:**

- To reduce the amount of salt consumed by children
- To publicise that children should eat even less salt than adults
- To highlight where the salt comes from in children's diets
- To provide practical information on how to reduce the level of salt children eat

### **Resources:**

In advance of World Salt Awareness Week, various resources were provided to our members to be used, or adapted for use. Members were encouraged to review local messages regarding salt intake, targets for children (if available) and sources of salt in the diet.

#### **1. Poster**

- *'Are your children overdosing on salt?'* Demonstrating how easy it is to eat more than the recommended maximum intake.

#### **2. Leaflet**

- *Salt intake and the health of your children* - includes information on the long term health implications of eating too much salt, recommended maximum intakes and practical advice.
- *Salt and its effect on your health* - includes information on the health implications of eating too much salt, a list of foods that are high and low in salt, and steps to reduce salt in your diet.

- *The importance of cutting salt as you grow older* - describes why it is especially important to cut salt intake as you get older as this will immediately cut the risk of stroke and heart attack

### **3. Health Care Professionals Pack (HCPS)**

- Invitation to HCPS to get involved in WSAW
- Participation letter for HCPS to inform us of their intentions

### **4. Press Release:**

- Demonstrating how much salt a child can eat in one day
- Informing about the upper limit for children of different ages
- Showing how parents and carers can make sure their children do not eat too much

### **5. Fact sheets:**

- A fact sheet was developed to highlight the issues that remain around salt labelling and detailing how consumers can calculate the amount of salt in food when only sodium is labelled.

### **6. Surveys:**

- Details of how to conduct a consumer survey through e.g. parenting websites to establish e.g. parents' attitudes and awareness of salt issues.

## **Feedback on resources:**

Despite obvious language barriers, these resources were widely used and considered very useful to the WASH members, especially the draft press release, the website and the fact sheets. The design and format (PDF) of the leaflet and poster made them harder to adapt to different markets, however please see the evaluation of Georgia to see how they can be used in future Weeks.

## **Events taking place around the world:**

We had fantastic support from WASH representatives around the world. Activities ranged from involvement from hypertension experts, representatives from the health and education ministries, consumers, the media and the food industry. World Salt Awareness Week received wide-ranging local, national and international media coverage, including conferences, radio and press interviews, publication in newspapers, magazines and newsletters, school activities, meetings with schoolchildren and teachers, educating doctors on a personal level, talking to patients and word of mouth, including informal education sessions at places of work.

Below are some more in-depth examples of supporting events that took place around the world and how the resources were utilised during the Week. Supporting documents such as photos and press releases are available on the WASH website:

### ***Australia***

Australia World Action on Salt and Health (AWASH) involved scientific experts, political representatives and the food industry in World Salt Awareness Week. Activities included holding a conference, at which Dame Deidre Hutton, Chairperson of the UK's Food Standard's Agency was a speaker, lobbying for reduced salt in foods and improved food labelling. The press release achieved publicity with radio, press and TV interviews.

### ***Bangladesh***

Professor Khandaker, on behalf of the Hypertension Committee of the National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh, held a round table meeting in collaboration with the World Health Organization. The theme was 'Salt and Hypertension' and was attended by leading physicians, cardiologists, nutritionists, bio-chemists and personnel from the food industry. A keynote paper 'Salt consumption in hypertensive patients attending in a tertiary level cardiac hospital' was presented by Dr Sohel Reza Choudhury, sharing results of a study investigating the knowledge, attitude and practice of salt intake in Bangladesh.

Discussion highlighted the fact that measurements of salt intake have been limited, a conservative estimate shows that about 15 million adults in Bangladesh are suffering from high blood pressure. Current methods of detection and treatment were highlighted as being far from adequate.

### ***Canada***

Cathy Campbell and Kevin Willis of the Canadian Stroke Network in Canada undertook a number of activities. The CSN partnered up with two of Canada's Networks of Centres of Excellence – the Canadian Obesity Network and the Advanced foods and materials Network – to award the first national 'Salt Lick' Award for the saltiest kid's meal, and received extensive coverage in newspapers, on TV and on the radio.

***Croatia*** held a conference featuring experts, the food industry, patients and students and conducted a radio interview on the subject of World Salt Awareness Week. Croatia also intends to highlight the issues of salt and hypertension in the World Hypertension Day (May 17<sup>th</sup> 2008).

### ***Georgia***

Georgia, represented by WASH member Dr Dali Trapaidze, held a very productive World Salt Awareness week event, undertaking many activities including:

1. A conference, briefing the media, non-governmental and governmental sectors to discuss behavioral stereotypes, nutritional health and hypertension.

2. Education interventions in schools
3. An official letter from the President of Georgian Society of Hypertension, Prof. Bezhan Tsinamdzgvrishvili was sent to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Head of the Department of Child Care.
4. Receiving funding support from Nikora (school meals manufacturer) and McDonald's.
5. Creation and publication of posters and guides.
6. Pilot study of children 11-16 years old for appearance of hypertension and its risk factors, and educational focus groups and questionnaires.

Georgia achieved high awareness throughout the country on the radio ('Radio Imedi' and 'Public Radio'), newspapers ('24-hour', 'Rezonansi' and 'Akhail Taobi'), websites ('interpresnews')

There is a lack of screening for high blood pressure and obesity in Georgia and a need for further study. The Georgian Society of Hypertension concluded that awareness regarding salt intake and its associated health problems was low and that educational interventions were needed.

**Nigeria** saw experts come together to hold a symposium for the Week.

The Institute of Public Health of Vojvodina (**Serbia**) investigated salt content in the food in the market as a project supported by the Novi Sad Assembly, Health Authorities and Preventative medicine experts from the Institute of Public Health.

### **Slovakia**

The Slovak League against Hypertension produced a press release highlighting the effects of salt on blood pressure and held a press conference in Bratislava on the 20<sup>th</sup> February 2008 to experts, food producers and volunteers. The Chairman, Associate Professor Štefan Farský, drew attention to the worldwide maximum recommended salt levels and then highlighted the current situation in Slovakia. Assoc. Prof. Farský concluded that the Slovak public does not have enough access to information about salt content to be able to make informed choices, and urges Slovakian manufacturers to provide the salt content on labels. Lectures included:

1. Farský, Š.: The relationship between salt intake and high blood pressure
2. Lieskovská, M., Mačejovská, M.: The salt content in the food of Slovak market.
3. Farský, Š.: How to reduce salt intake at population level (European initiative CASH)

Further to this, Assoc. Prof Farský has proposed that the Slovak Cardiology Congress includes issues relating to salt in the National Cardiovascular Program and has also proposed the inclusion of urine Sodium content measurements as a compulsory part of regular preventive examination.

**Sweden** marked the event involving scientists and the Swedish Food Agency by issuing a press release, which occurred alongside an EU food conference. Prof. Mattias and his team are now planning to organize a National Salt Symposium this autumn.

### **Turkey**

The Turkish Society of Hypertension and Renal Diseases made a valuable contribution to World Salt Awareness Week through the hard work of Professor Mustafa Arici and the Society's executive board. A press release was adapted with locally relevant information from the WASH template and WASH resources. This was issued to the press, achieving a great response and high awareness across various media including the internet and national newspapers. The Week was also promoted through the Society's website to its members, including the Ministry of Health of Turkey ([www.turkhipertansiyon.org](http://www.turkhipertansiyon.org)).

Current studies in Turkey include "Hypertension incidence in Turkey" and "SALTurkey: Salt consumption and hypertension in Turkey, which will be announced in the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Congress of Hypertension and Renal Diseases (22<sup>nd</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> May 2008). The Society has great plans for future activity, incorporating World Salt Awareness Week with the results of SALTurkey and potentially promoting the Week with leaflets, posters, educational programs, radio and television spots.

### **UK**

Consensus Action on Salt and Health (CASH) held its 9th National Salt Awareness Week. A media release was issued during the Week highlighting that many foods eaten by UK children still contain large amounts of salt. Our media release also revealed the results of research carried out with Netmums, a leading parenting website, showing that many parents are confused about which foods contain salt. On the 30<sup>th</sup> January a lunchtime reception was held at the House of Commons, with speakers including Dawn Primarolo the Minister of State for Public Health and CASH Chairman Professor Graham MacGregor. There were around 100 guests including representatives from retailers, food manufacturers, caterers, charities, MPs, Department of Health (DH), the Food Standards Agency (FSA), media and other stakeholders.

Coverage of our Salt Awareness Week 2008 messages was achieved across press, radio, TV and online. In total, we estimate that the media coverage of Salt Awareness Week 2008 achieved in excess of 130 million opportunities to see/hear. The UK had fantastic support from health professionals with nearly 300 supporting events being held throughout the country

## **Further suggestions from WASH members;**

- Undertake real examinations of salt content made by independent laboratories
- More accurate data on the daily salt intake of populations via repeated urinary collection
- Share Websites of other International activities
- Encourage wider use of the WASH template presentation (available on the WASH website) including formal lectures for the medical community.
- Provide guidance on securing funding and/or sponsorship

## **Summary**

World Salt Awareness Week 2008 raised International awareness of the unnecessarily high amounts of salt consumed by children, and the harmful effects this can have on their health. The most effective strategies involved several activities, such as producing a press release, holding a conference and distributing posters and leaflets to health professionals.

Many countries have limited salt intake data and so were unable to focus specifically on children. However WASH believes that each country undertook relevant and worthwhile activities and that great progress is being made.

## **World Salt Awareness Week 2009**

Moving forward, WASH intends to involve the member countries in the early planning stages of World Salt Awareness Week 2009. No theme has yet been decided, and we would welcome suggestions from our WASH members. Having received positive feedback from participants, and useful advice on the resources available, we believe that next year will be an even bigger and more impactful event with participation expected from all of this year's participants, and many more besides.

### **For further information contact:**

WASH, Blood Pressure Unit, St George's Hospital Medical School, Cranmer Terrace, London SW17 0RE  
Tel: 0208 725 2409 · Email: [wash@sgul.ac.uk](mailto:wash@sgul.ac.uk)

**[www.worldactiononsalt.com](http://www.worldactiononsalt.com)**