

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. Message from the Chairman
2. Employee news
3. WASH news
4. Research news
5. International news
6. Country updates
7. Industry update
9. Taking action in your country
8. Upcoming events

### Introduction from Professor Graham MacGregor, Chairman of WASH

*World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) was established in October 2005 with the aim of bringing about a gradual reduction in salt intake throughout the world. We encourage and support our expert members in different countries to promote salt reduction by setting up their own local campaigns.*

*Best wishes,*



## WASH WELCOMES NEW PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITIONIST AND PROJECT COORDINATOR

Dear WASH members, I am very pleased to introduce myself to you as the new Public Health Nutritionist and Project Coordinator for WASH. I am looking forward to working with you all to bring about a worldwide reduction in salt intakes.

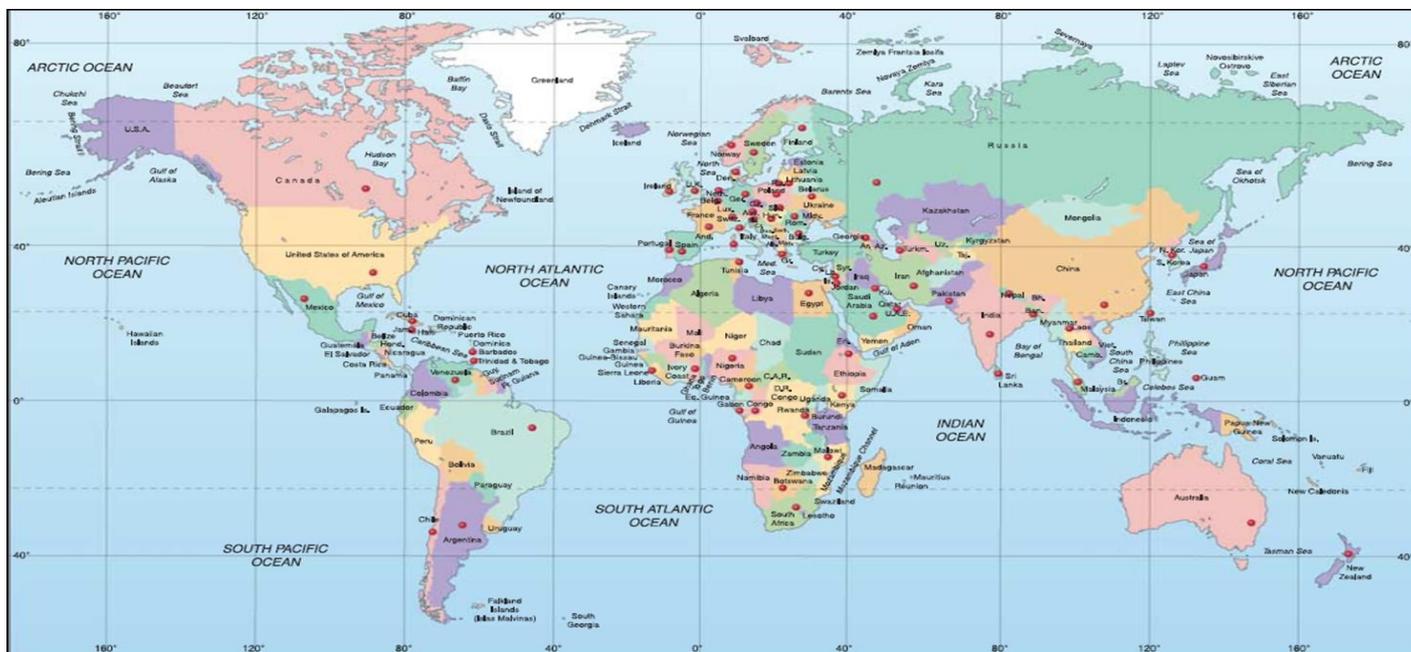
This newsletter is to keep you updated on the progress in salt reduction around the world. If you have any suggestions that you would like to make, or news that you would like to share with WASH members I would welcome all correspondence from you. Please email me at: [c.e.farrand@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:c.e.farrand@qmul.ac.uk)

Kind regards, Clare Farrand

## WASH MEMBER NEWS

We are happy to welcome all new members, and encourage WASH members to spread the invitation to their international colleagues. Please email: [c.e.farrand@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:c.e.farrand@qmul.ac.uk) for further information.

WASH membership has now grown to **410** individuals from **82** countries. New members include experts from: Bahrain, Bangladesh, Botswana, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Cuba, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, India, Iran, Italy, Kenya, Lithuania, Malta, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Poland, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland and USA. Click the map on the next page to view a members list:



Action groups on salt reduction around the world. The red dot indicates the location of World Action on Salt and Health (WASH) members.

## WORLD SALT AWARENESS WEEK 2010

World Salt Awareness Week was a fantastic success thanks to the hard work and determination of our members.

WASH held its 3rd annual World Salt Awareness Week (February 1st - 7th 2010) focusing on **Salt and Your Health**. We aimed to raise awareness that a high salt diet can not only lead to high blood pressure but to osteoporosis, obesity, stomach cancer, kidney stones, and stroke.

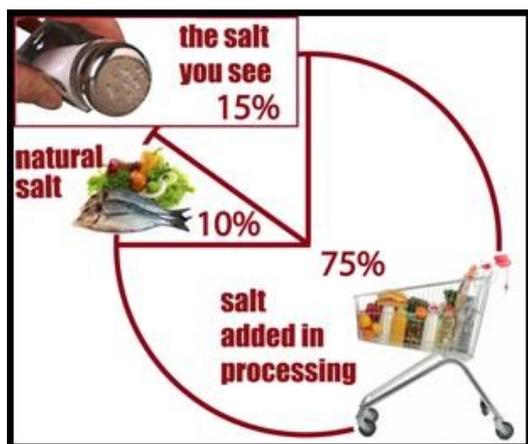
The 2010 World Salt Awareness Week saw participation from 21 member countries: Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, India, Israel, Nigeria, Pakistan, Poland, Portugal, Serbia,

Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, UK and the US.

Activities ranged from involvement with 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. Below is a spotlight on activities around the world:

The **Australian** division of World Action on Salt and Health (**AWASH**), in line with Salt Awareness Week, released new research which showed that more than 70% of processed meats, cheeses and sauces contain unacceptably high levels of salt in Australia. AWASH aims to raise

awareness and call the Australian Government to action to set salt targets for processed and takeaway foods.



In Canada, the Canadian Stroke Network concurrent with Salt Awareness Week, awarded their third annual 'Salt Lick Award' to Gerber Graduates Lil' Entrees. The 'Salt Lick Award' highlights foods that are inappropriately high in sodium. This year the 'Salt Lick Award' focused on foods directed at children. [For more information please click here](#)

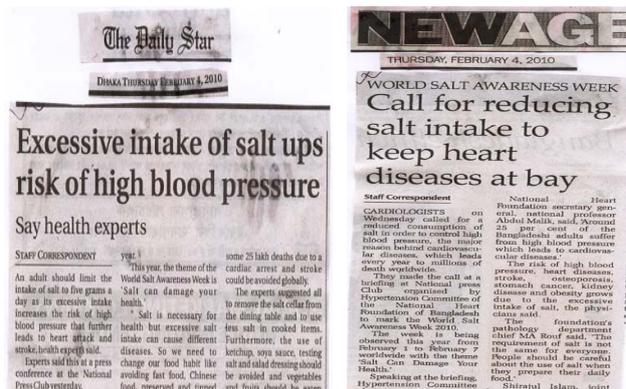
The Italian Society of Human Nutrition (SINU) and The Working Group for Reduction of Salt Intake (GIRCSI) produced leaflets, posters and press releases for the promotion of the Week.



Leaflet produced by SINU for WSAW in Italy

These were disseminated through food service companies and through SINU and GIRCSI members. More than 50 websites in Italy publicised the Week.

The National Heart Foundation of Bangladesh held a press conference on the 3rd February 2010 and printed and distributed posters and brochures to raise awareness of salt and health. Different national leading newspapers of the country published news highlighting how excessive intake of salt can damage our health.



Press coverage in Bangladesh of WSAW 2010 by Hypertension Committee of National Heart Foundation

Barbados supported Salt Awareness Week and generated media attention in the national paper advertising the benefits of a low salt diet and the work being carried out in the Caribbean to raise awareness amongst consumers. Free blood pressure checks were offered to the public at various locations across Barbados.

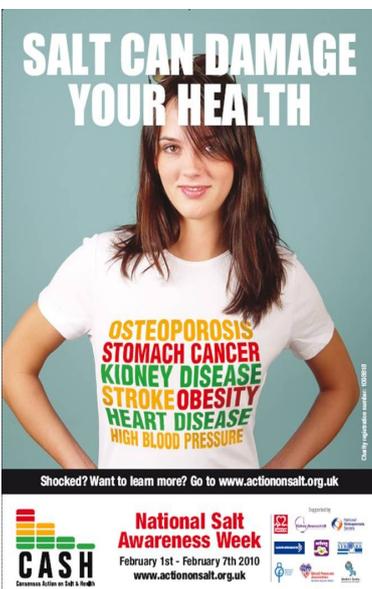
The National Health Fund of Jamaica distributed flyers, posters within the community

and produced radio adverts detailing the harm of having too much salt in your diet. They also conducted free blood pressure checks in their Customer Care Department and printed silicon armbands for adults and children reminding them to 'drop the salt: protect your health'.

**Pakistan** held a main seminar in the Capital City Islamabad which had both good media and public support. Further promotion of Salt Awareness week was continued at the Pakistan Hypertension Meeting in Faisalabad on the 27<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> Feb 2010.

The **UK** celebrated Salt Awareness Week with national media coverage following a public opinion survey showing that people do not know how salt can damage their health. More than 500 supporting events were held across the country by health professionals, universities, schools and workplaces. The Week saw a

Reception at the House of Commons, with representation from the UK government, experts from industry and the UK's leading health charities, including the British Heart Foundation, The Stroke Association,



National Osteoporosis Society and Cancer Research UK. [For more information please click here](#)

### WORLD SALT AWARENESS WEEK 2011

Following the success of the World Salt Awareness Week in 2010, focusing on the effects of salt on health, World Salt Awareness Week 2011 has been confirmed for **Monday 21<sup>st</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> March 2011**. This is later than previous years to accommodate WASH Member schedules.

We would like to invite all WASH members to participate in 2011; the proposed topic is '**Salt and Men's Health**'. This topic was identified as a result of UK research which showed that more men prematurely die of cardiovascular disease (CVD) than women. CVD accounts for 29% preventable deaths in men (compared to 21% in women). The research shows that men eat more salt than women and on average have a higher blood pressure than women, particularly at a younger age, and are less likely to have their blood pressure measured, to take action to reduce it when it is raised or to take blood pressure lowering drugs.

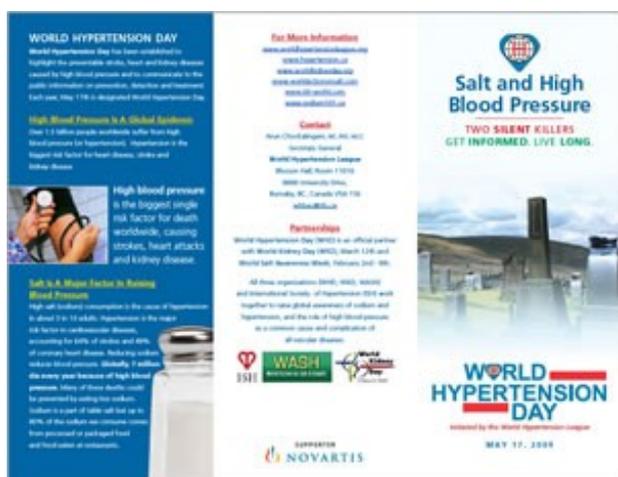
WASH will be contacting all members to request support in due course. However if you would like to offer your support for World Salt Awareness Week 2011 now, please email [c.e.farrand@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:c.e.farrand@qmul.ac.uk)

## WORLD HYPERTENSION DAY

WASH once again supported World Hypertension Day on 17th May 2010. The theme was 'Healthy weight, healthy blood pressure'. The event highlighted that:

- Being overweight can lead to hypertension which in turn can lead to stroke, heart failure, aneurysm, type 2 diabetes, certain forms of cancer and kidney failure - all of which can be fatal.
- Whilst salt is the major factor putting up blood pressure, paying attention to your weight can ultimately create better overall health.
- If salt intake were halved, it would save approximately 2.5 million lives a year worldwide.

Please look at the website for further information by clicking the image below:



## RESEARCH NEWS

A new study further confirms salt reduction as a major international public health target. A paper by Bibbins-Domingo *et al* published in the New England Journal of Medicine earlier this year makes a further compelling case for salt reduction throughout the world. The paper emphasises the enormous public health benefits and cost savings of salt reduction programmes. [To read this paper please click here.](#)

**Reducing Population Salt Intake Worldwide: From Evidence to Implementation.** He & MacGregor (2010) published a review of the current and planned salt reduction approaches that are being put in place around the world. The paper also reviews the increasing evidence that a high salt intake may directly increase the risk of stroke, left ventricular hypertrophy and renal disease; is associated with obesity, renal stones and osteoporosis; and is probably a major cause of stomach cancer. [To read this paper please click here.](#)

**WASH - World Action on Salt and Health.** He, Macgregor and Jenner (2010) published a report on the work of WASH which highlights that our high salt intake is the major factor increasing blood pressure and thereby a major cause of cardiovascular disease and kidney disease worldwide. It reiterates the importance of reducing population level salt intakes to <5g per

day in order to prevent millions of deaths each year and make major savings for healthcare services. WASH is a coalition of health professionals from different countries who are aware of the risks of a high salt diet and have a role in implementing change in their own countries. [To read this paper please click here](#)

### **Institute of Medicine Report: Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States**

In April 2010, The Institute of Medicine released their report 'Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake in the United States'. This report concluded that a new, coordinated approach is needed to reduce sodium content in food, requiring new government standards for the acceptable level of sodium. The committee recommended that the FDA set mandatory national standards for the sodium content in foods. The committee highlighted the importance of taking a carefully monitored, gradual approach to sodium reduction. [To read this report please click here.](#)

### **Suboptimal Potassium Intake and Potential Impact on Population Blood Pressure**

Earlier this month (13th September 2010) Dutch scientists released a paper in which they have calculated that increasing individual potassium intake to the recommended level of 4.7g per day would, across populations, results in a lowering of systolic blood pressure of around 3mmHg with an attendant significant drop in

the number of deaths from heart attacks and strokes. This research letter emphasizes that an increase in potassium intake, in addition to a decrease in sodium intake, is likely to have a positive effect on lowering blood pressure and therefore reducing our risk of having a stroke, a heart attack or heart failure. It is very important that people try and eat more fruit and vegetables to increase the potassium in their diets, however the simplest and cheapest way of lowering your blood pressure it to reduce your sodium intake by eating less salt.

[To read this paper please click here](#)

[For further research on the beneficial effects of potassium on human health please click here](#)

### **INTERNATIONAL NEWS**

#### **World Health Organisation: Population sodium reduction strategies**

As part of the implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health and the 2008-2013 Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, WHO will convene three multi-stakeholder information exchange forums and technical meetings focusing on three aspects of population sodium reduction strategies as follows:



The first of which - creating an enabling environment - was held in London on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010, jointly convened with the Food Standards Agency, UK. The output from the meeting will be shared once made available. [Further information is available here](#)

The Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO) WHO regional expert group on cardiovascular disease prevention through Dietary Salt Reduction produced a policy statement outlining the recommendations for a population based approach to reduce dietary salt intake in the Americas, to reduce salt intake to the internationally recommended target of less than 5g per day per person by 2020. [Further information is available here](#)

## COUNTRY UPDATES

The Australian Division of WASH (AWASH) continues to be very active in its national salt reduction strategy. A total of 20 Australian

companies are now committed to the AWASH salt reduction strategy. The Australian Government has put out a call for salt targets for breads and breakfast cereals - a major contributor of salt to the Australian diet. AWASH recognises that this is a good start but is calling on the Australian Government to take action to set targets for all processed and takeaway foods. [For more information please click here](#)

## Canadians release sodium reduction strategy

On the 29<sup>th</sup> July 2010 the Sodium Working Group (SWG) released its Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada.

The sodium reduction strategy includes a structured voluntary reduction of sodium in processed food products and foods sold in food service establishments; education and awareness of consumers, industry, health professionals and other key stakeholders; and research in line with the recommendations published by the Institute of Medicines in the U.S. National Academies' (IOM). A fourth component, monitoring and evaluation, cuts across all three other areas.

It is currently estimated that the average consumption of sodium in Canada is 3,400mg per day (8.5g salt) from all sources.

The Strategy has an interim sodium intake goal of a population average of 2300mg sodium per day to be achieved by 2016. The ultimate goal

is to lower sodium intakes to a population mean (greater than 95% of the population) below 2300mg sodium per day. [For more information please click here](#)

The Canadian Stroke Network is busy keeping the pressure on and encouraging consumers to make lower salt choices. [Please click here for more information](#)

In **Ireland** there are a number of stakeholders who are working to reduce the population's salt intake. The Irish Heart Foundation has a number of initiatives aimed at salt awareness; The Health Service Executive (HSE) is working to establish a healthy food procurement policy with the major suppliers of bread and other foods to reduce salt content and The Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Food who have awarded over 2 million Euros in funding to help reduce salt levels in foods. For further information about the work that is taking place in Ireland, [please click here](#).

**Italy** has reached an agreement with bread manufacturers to lower the salt content of bread. Professor Strazzullo coordinates the NGO Interdisciplinary Working Group for reduction of Salt Intake in Italy (GIRCSI) on behalf of eight Italian scientific societies committed to the salt problem.

Negotiations have been going on for almost two

years between the Italian ministry of health supported by GIRCSI and other experts with the associations of bakers and an agreement was reached by July 2009 for a gradual 15 per cent reduction in the salt content of bread over two years.



In **France**, Professor Michel Krempf and fellow experts have joined together to form a salt reduction action group—'Groupe SALT'. It is a voluntary organisation, based on similar principles as WASH, which welcomes the support of its members to stimulate action in this area. Groupe SALT will be holding a press conference on the 21st October 2010 at the Hotel Meridien-Montparnasse, Paris. The press release will be available on the WASH website following the event.

In addition, nineteen of the biggest manufacturers in France have agreed to use less salt. These brands include Findus, McCains, Maggie, Lesieur and Fleury-Michon, and will aim to reduce sodium between 5-25% across their products. This is part of the health Ministry's *Plan National Nutrition Santé*, which plans to cut individual salt intake to 6g salt per day.

The **Portuguese** parliament has approved a law to restrict the sodium content of bread, with a

view to reduce heart disease. This was achieved through the success of the Portuguese Society of Hypertensions (PAASH) mass media campaign which highlighted the harmful consequences of consuming too much salt.

In the **UK**, under the new Coalition Government, Nutrition Policy has now moved from The Food Standards Agency to the Department of Health; this includes the UK's salt reduction strategy. CASH are working to ensure that the work already undertaken by the FSA is continued and salt reduction remains high on the agenda. CASH has undertaken a number of product surveys including pasta sauces, soups, takeaways, curries and salads. These surveys have generated widespread national media coverage and directly resulted in many companies reformulating their products with less salt. [Click to see CASH newsletter](#)

In the **USA**, **New York City** has set a salt reduction goal of gradually reducing the amount of salt in packaged and restaurant food by 25% over the next five years. The plan includes voluntary targets, based on those currently seen in the UK, which although not legislated, will require cooperation from manufacturers on a national scale. [Please click here to view the salt targets](#)

**Other countries** taking action include: New Zealand, led by Mark Vivian Chief Executive of

The Stroke Foundation; and Sweden who are in the initial stages of setting up their own salt action group. We encourage other WASH members to do the same, and take the lead in your country.

[For more information please click here](#)

## INDUSTRY UPDATES

*Below are some highlights of the salt reduction progress from international manufacturers:*

**Kelloggs** has identified 9 cereals in its Canadian portfolio containing more than 230 mg of sodium. For all these relatively salty products Kellogg plans to cut sodium levels to 200 mg by early 2011. [Please click here for the full news article](#)

**McCain Foods** in working on new recipes for its packaged food products to meet guidelines laid out in Health Canada's Sodium Reduction strategy. [Please click here for the full news article](#)

In the UK **Subway** has announced that the salt levels in its products have been reduced by an average of 33% by working closely with suppliers to reduce the salt content in raw ingredients. [Please click here for the full news article](#)

**Unilever** has committed to reduce salt across its entire portfolio. Between 2003-2008

Unilever removed almost 9,100 tonnes of salt from its products without any customer complaints or adverse cost effects. This shows it can be done, and will continue to help reach the dietary intake target of 5g / day as set by the WHO. [Please click here for further information](#)

### GET INVOLVED - LESS SALT PLEASE!



If you're a WASH member and would like to stimulate action and reduce the population salt intake in your country here are some things you can do now:

1. Identify the Policy Leaders in your country and write to them - highlight the need to take action.
2. Manufacturers such as Heinz, Subway and Kellogg's in the UK are making great progress in salt reduction — why don't you contact organizations in your own country and find out what they are doing.
3. Add your voice. The supermarkets and the food industry claim that no-one ever told them they want foods with less salt and

unless consumers demand it, they don't see a need to change. Why not write to your food suppliers and tell them about the very high salt and fat content of the processed foods that they make.

4. Survey widely consumed products that are high in salt, following the recent survey examples set by CASH - the UK action group on salt and health—on the amount of salt in soups/salads. [For more information please click here](#)
5. WASH is leveraging the relationship between its scientific members and the policy makers of the EU and WHO. WASH encourages you to get in touch with your country's representative to offer your expertise and encouragement. Group members can be found on our website. [Please click here](#)

### Upcoming Events:

- 18th-20th October 2010—WHO Population Sodium Reduction Strategies 2nd platform meeting, 'Evaluation and monitoring' Calgary, Canada. [For more information click here](#)
- 25th-26th October 2010—Championing Public Health Nutrition, Ottawa, Canada. [For more information click here](#)
- 28th-29th October Malta Sugar and Salt Reduction Strategies 2010. [For more information click here](#)

**For further information contact:**

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