

ASN Advisory Committee on Ensuring Trust in Nutrition Science
CALL NOTES
Wednesday, June 14, 2017

Bert Garza, Chair
Sylvia Rowe
Robert Steinbrook
John Courtney
Eric Campbell
Patrick Stover
Martha Field
Cathie Woteki
Ed Cooney
Sarah Ohlhorst, staff

Chair Bert Garza welcomed the committee. This call will focus on the communications content of Section 4.

Committee Review of DRAFT Communications Outline

It was suggested that this section lead in with a paragraph on the current landscape of sources that drive nutrition information to the public. However, no one on the call was aware of an existing landscape analysis on which to build or of definitive reviews of sources that drive nutrition info to the public. There was acknowledgement of a plethora of information sources available to the public. Sources of valid nutrition information were identified (e.g., Ag Research Center in Beltsville can provide a good overview, as well as other Human Nutrition Research Centers), but these were not acknowledged as likely sources driving the nutrition communications. Who are the drivers of the communications process itself? Government is a key driver. Research also drives the conversation. The writing team will look at the 2017 NASEM report [Communicating Science Effectively: A Research Agenda](#) to guide this introductory section and piece together a landscape analysis, even if the analysis focuses primarily on what we are lacking in this area. This was identified as likely useful in facilitating conversation that engenders trust. It was also suggested that the committee reach out to the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) to see if they have relevant nutrition communications information. The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics and SNEB may have bits and pieces on nutrition communications that can be pulled together to make some sort of body of evidence.

Those on the call identified the need for the scientific community to speak more with one voice and rely on collections of scientists to communicate what is known about relationships between nutrition and health and whatever issue may be of interest. What can ASN do; what audiences can ASN reach? Elementary education on nutrition was a suggestion, including a partnership with Scholastic. Non-profits can harness the power of their membership to synthesize what is known and communicate that in a reader-friendly way to the public and others. This is applicable as a starting point for nutrition, although specific research targeting the field is needed.

Universities and industry have become much more attuned to promotion of health (wellness programs) and containing health care costs. Have types of activities that center on

communications been evaluated? How much of a component was nutrition in such wellness programs? It also was suggested that the committee better understand the role of insurance companies and the information sources they rely on to promote wellness and treatment goals, and determine if their efforts have been evaluated.

While consumer research is conducted by companies to make their communications most effective to the public, this research doesn't get to the level of rigor we are seeking. It wouldn't be the first direction to go, although aspects might be valuable once explored. The important point was made to not confuse communications, education and marketing in this section, as each is very different.

When considering communications-related recommendations, the identification of spaces in which ASN can have the most impact was viewed as particularly important. For example, should ASN recommend specific practices for nutrition literacy? Should ASN broaden evidence-based communications among its members? Should ASN initiate a citizen science effort? An ASN role to further nutrition in communications could be a strong recommendation. There are ways to make that recommendation that it may not be deemed self-serving, including articulating a strategy that ASN could use.

One sentence should be removed from the draft section outline: ~~There is an increasing need for government to anticipate and pre-empt public controversies in science that disrupt research and related economies (7).~~ This sentence was taken from an article that came up during the structured search and made the case for government intervention in communications controversies, but the committee suggested we should not wade into a controversial topic such as this.

Next Steps

We will begin to see a more cohesive draft report before the next call in July. We still anticipate a final report around October.

The call adjourned at 2:00 PM.