

2014 Consensus Conference on Nutrition: The Alignment of National/International Sodium Guidelines with Current Evidence

On May 14-16, 2014, the CAHS co-convened (with the World Heart Federation [WHF]) a Consensus Conference on Nutrition, held at the Population Health Research Institute of McMaster University and Hamilton Health Sciences. In a series of expert presentations, followed by extensive discussion and debate, invited participants examined current research and knowledge about the effects on cardiovascular events of a wide range of dietary nutrients. The WHF and the CAHS had put in place explicit guidelines in regard to conflict of interest, financial sponsorship, and program committee responsibilities (publicly available on the conference website <http://www.nutritioncvd2014.com/body.cfm?id=1>).

CAHS took responsibility for a Symposium on Dietary Sodium: “The Alignment of National/International Guidelines with Current Evidence,” while the WHF managed other nutrients. In the sodium portion of the meeting, the agenda included speakers from the Global Burden of Diseases Group, the Canadian Sodium Working Group, the WHO Sodium Guidelines Group, and the American Heart Association Guidelines Committee. Their presentations provided essential context for presentations of new data (including the June 2013 report of the IOM Sodium Intake in Populations Expert Panel) challenging some of the evidence for recommendations for stringent restriction of dietary sodium.

Summary of Points with Reasonable Levels of Agreement among Speakers

Stuart MacLeod, MD, PhD, FRCPC of University of British Columbia, a Fellow of CAHS who is a clinical pharmacologist, chaired a workshop of the speakers on dietary sodium on the third day of the meeting and was charged with developing a summary of the dietary sodium proceedings. **John Cairns**, MD, FRCPC, the President of CAHS who is a cardiologist, was a member of the conference organizing committee and worked with Dr MacLeod on the preparation of the summary. MacLeod and Cairns are recognized for their research in fields outside of nutrition and the relationship of dietary sodium to blood pressure and cardiovascular events. Neither of them identifies a conflict of interest arising from public views about dietary sodium, participation in the guidelines of national agencies for dietary sodium, conduct of dietary sodium research or research support or compensation from the food industry. In the following they attempt to summarize the salient points around which they perceived reasonable levels of agreement among the participants in the meeting, although no formal consensus of views was undertaken.

1. Elevated blood pressure increases the risk of cardiovascular events (MI, stroke, CV death).
2. Most published reports indicate a positive association between dietary sodium intake and blood pressure
3. Observational studies generally have shown that excessive dietary sodium intake is associated with increased rates of cardiovascular events
4. Comprehensive assessment of national and subnational dietary surveys and 24-hour urine collections, find that sodium intake is high in every region of the world, and is especially high from Eastern Europe through to Southeast Asia. In the majority of countries intake