

# Nutrition and Cancer Task Force

## Report Form 2019

International collaboration on nutrition in relation to cancer (ICONIC)



**IUNS**  
INTERNATIONAL  
UNION OF  
NUTRITIONAL  
SCIENCES

## Task Force Chair/s

Professor Alan Jackson, University of Southampton and IUNS International Malnutrition Task Force Chair

## Task Force Members

- Dr Alexia Alford, IAEA-Nutrition Specialist
- Dr Kate Allen, WCRF-International-Executive Director of Science and Public Affairs
- Dr Marc Gunter, IARC-Head of the Nutrition and Metabolism Department
- Dr Giota Mitrou, WCRF International-Director of Research
- Professor Martin Wiseman, WCRF International-Medical & Scientific Adviser
- Dr Shalini Jayasekar Zúrn, UICC-Senior Advocacy Manager

1. Ex-officio: Professor Catherine Geissler, IUNS-Secretary General at International Union of Nutritional Sciences

## Summary of activities in 2019

### Overall Aims and Objectives

The Task Force aims to:

- foster a community of clinicians, oncologists, scientists, researchers, patients and the public to share knowledge, understanding and best practice, to jointly deliver high quality research;
- build capability and capacity in the area of nutrition and cancer to foster excellence in research and practice and ensure continuity into the future;
- raise awareness of the opportunities to improve prevention and care in people living with and beyond cancer through nutrition; and
- provide a robust base for public policy to address the increasing burden of cancer.

## **Key activities**

The Task Force (ICONIC) met four times in 2019. The focus was to continue raising awareness and create linkages amongst individuals and groups to better enable more clearly structured and organised activities to be carried forwards.

Given the diverse interest among the international community surrounding childhood cancers, ICONIC continued exploring the opportunity to formalise its relationship with paediatric oncologists in order to facilitate collaboration and develop important activities in this area. It also started seeking to better understand the likely nutritional mechanisms underlying the poor prognosis for cancer of the breast in women of African ancestry and develop approaches to improve outcomes, especially those in LMIC – it was successful in its application to facilitate a session on this topic at the World Cancer Congress in Oman in 2020. In addition, building a more extensive capability and stronger capacity for excellence in research and practice across LMIC, was identified as a fundamental and critical challenge. ICONIC committed to fostering capacity building as a core ambition and started looking to identify the best way to develop and implement training to improve the preparation of grant proposals from LMIC.

## **Publication and Communication activities**

Publications included an article in the Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism in December, and a statement presented by UICC on behalf of ICONIC at the World Health Assembly (WHA) in May in response to a report by the WHO Director General. Other communication activities included developing ICONIC's own webpage, creating an active Twitter account, and starting to develop a newsletter and logo.

## **Stakeholder engagement**

ICONIC continued to engage with stakeholders and invite the wider community of nutritionists, especially those with responsibility for the prevention and care of cancer, to join and participate in carrying forward the ambition to make a meaningful difference. The level of engagement and response continued to be encouraging.

# **Report of Activities and Achievements in 2019**

## **Task Force Meetings**

Four meetings were held in 2019, in March, June, September and November. The main focus of the discussions was to refine the work plan and identify opportunities for collaboration and engagement with the international community.

ICONIC recognised there was no structure through which individuals and communities could formally engage and subsequently developed a common framework for considering the different issues, to help with organising activity and engagement with the international community.

#### Formal agreements with member organisations

Formal agreements for collaboration between IUNS and member organisations including WCRF International, UICC and IAEA were finalised. Verbal agreement for formal collaboration with IARC was also received, with a plan to finalise in writing as soon as possible.

#### International activity in the area of nutrition and childhood cancers

Given the diverse interest among the international community surrounding childhood cancers, ICONIC continued to explore the opportunity to formalise its relationship with paediatric oncologists in order to facilitate collaboration and develop important activities in this area. So far ICONIC has enjoyed an informal working relationship with the international paediatric nutrition and oncology group and provided significant help/support where possible. In 2018, ICONIC was approached by various paediatricians and nutritionists (through UICC) interested in nutrition and childhood cancers, with an interest in collaborating with the IUNS Task Force. This triggered ongoing discussions/meetings about how ICONIC might facilitate what is already happening in this area, as well as contribute other activities which might open opportunities more widely.

There are a number of groups internationally with a particular interest in this area, including IAEA and IARC (collaborators of ICONIC) - ICONIC continued to seek guidance from these two organisations. In addition, after some communication with paediatricians in the UK, including Professor Mike Stevens at the University of Bristol, a Children, Teenagers and Young Adults (CTYA) UK group was set up (<https://cancerandnutrition.nihr.ac.uk/work-streams/nutrition-in-children-teenagers-and-young-adults-with-cancer/>) - this became progressively more organised and received funding from the Wellcome Trust.

ICONIC's ambition is to help bring a stronger structure to the relationships over the next period and will continue to see how it can support this activity in 2020.

## Nutrition and breast cancer in women of African ancestry in LMIC

In 2019, ICONIC expressed an ambition to seek to better understand the likely nutritional mechanisms underlying the poor prognosis for cancer of the breast in women of African ancestry, and develop approaches to improve outcomes, especially those in LMIC.

In May 2019, ICONIC put together an application for the MRC-GCRF funding call “Understanding the mechanistic links between nutrition and non-communicable diseases in low and middle-income countries” - with partners in Jamaica, Ghana, Kenya and the UK.

Although the application was unsuccessful, the process helped shape an activity for going forward and was still considered of high importance - ICONIC continues to seek opportunities for alternative funding for this work. ICONIC also sought opportunities to share learning and experience gained from existing research and to raise awareness of the need to develop research capability in this area - an application for a session at the World Cancer Congress in 2020 on this topic was successful (see below).

### Capacity building

ICONIC recognises that building a more extensive capability and stronger capacity for excellence in research and practice across LMIC is a fundamental and critical challenge. It began fostering capacity building as a core ambition and looked to identify the best way to develop and implement training and improve the preparation of grant proposals, especially for the most vulnerable places in LMIC. Professor Ellen Kampman from Wageningen University had also considered how her group might contribute to ICONIC's capacity building activities and suggested the value of having a distant learning course that would help with grant proposal writing in LMICs. Professor Kampman developed a first draft proposal, which was discussed in November 2019 and a plan was made to refine the proposal, as well consider how ICONIC might support the work going forward.

Given the reach of UICC, it was also suggested that this work might be of interest at the World Cancer Congress (WCC) in 2020, and there could be an opportunity to showcase this activity through an informal ‘Meet in the café’ session.

### Prehabilitation

The Royal College of Anaesthetists, Macmillan Cancer Support and the NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration published their report 'Prehabilitation for People with Cancer', which calls for changes to the delivery of cancer care across the UK, with a greater focus on prehabilitation including nutrition, physical activity and psychological support. The evidence was reviewed in the context of the UK's health system and ICONIC began to consider how these findings might be projected internationally.

## World Cancer Congress 2020

ICONIC submitted a session proposal for the 2020 World Cancer Congress in Oman, which was successful - the session will be focused on 'Nutrition and breast cancer in women of African ancestry in LMIC' and will include speakers from the US, Jamaica, Ghana, France and the UK. Professor Alan Jackson (Chair of ICONIC) will be chairing the session.

As mentioned above, given the reach of UICC there was also discussion about showcasing the work with Professor Kampman on capacity building at the WCC 2020 through an informal 'Meet in the café' session.

## GACD funding call

ICONIC started to consider the funding call from the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and Medical Research Council (MRC), in partnership with the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD), focused on implementation research proposals for the primary and/or secondary prevention of cancer in LMICs (<https://www.nihr.ac.uk/funding/global-alliance-for-chronic-diseases-primary-andor-secondary-prevention-of-cancer/22697>). ICONIC explored the number of opportunities offered through the call that sit very closely with its ambitions, and will consider submitting an application by the deadline in April 2020.

## Publications

- WHA statement – UICC presented a statement on behalf of ICONIC at the World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2019, in response to the document – “Outcome of the Second International Conference on Nutrition” (report by the WHO Director General). The statement was intended to also help raise the profile of the IUNS Task Force.
- ANM article

ICONIC published an article 'A global voice in nutrition and cancer' in the 'IUNS News' section of the Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism December issue (Ann Nutr Metab 2019; 75:201-202) - this provided some background to ICONIC's work as well as its current focus of activity <https://www.karger.com/Article/Abstract/505349>

## Stakeholder activity

ICONIC continues to recognise the importance of keeping in touch with stakeholders who had previously expressed an interest in its work. In 2019, a questionnaire was sent to interested stakeholders to gather more information about individuals and their organisations. Individuals were very interested in the work plan and a regular stakeholder newsletter was proposed to keep people informed of activity.

## Communications

- Twitter

ICONIC created a Twitter account as a way of keeping people informed of activities as well as an opportunity to engage with stakeholders interested in the work. ICONIC members also actively promoted the Task Force via their own Twitter accounts.

- Website

The NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration agreed to host a webpage for ICONIC on its website, in the absence of resource for ICONIC to create its own website (<https://cancerandnutrition.nihr.ac.uk/international-nutrition-and-cancer-task-force/>) (the IUNS Nutrition and Cancer Task Force developed out of recognition of the need to achieve internationally what the NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration was working towards at a national level within the UK). The webpage provides information about ICONIC and includes a contact form for people to get in touch.

- Features in other communications

ICONIC was also featured in other communications, including the NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration's August newsletter, and a WCRF Blog on 'Conferences, collaborations and cancer: Nutrition without borders' following the 3rd European Nutrition Conference in October 2019.

- Newsletter and logo

ICONIC began developing its own newsletter and logo, to be published in 2020 (please note these have now been published – link to newsletter

<https://mailchi.mp/1c1c2db7ebb8/welcome-to-iconics-first-newsletter-6311431?e=> which also includes a copy of the logo).

## Funding

ICONIC secured funding for the first year from UICC, and agreement from WCRF and UICC to further contribute for another year. It also explored other opportunities for funding, including the MRC-GCRF funding call (April 2019) and upcoming funding calls in 2020 (including GACD funding call mentioned above).

## Conferences

Members were again proactive in promoting the Task Force at conferences and meetings at which they had a presence during 2019.

In October, Professor Alan Jackson attended the 3rd European Nutrition Conference, co-organised by the Nutrition Society (UK and Ireland) and the Federation of European Nutrition Societies (FENS 2019).

## Plan for the next year

The focus of ICONIC's activity for 2020 will include the following:

- Continue current activities in the areas detailed above including
- Progress activity in the area of nutrition and breast cancer in women of African ancestry in LMIC (including seeking opportunities for funding).
- Formalise the relationship with paediatric oncologists in order to facilitate collaboration and develop important activities in this area.
- Continue to collaborate with Professor Ellen Kampman to develop and implement training for improving the preparation of grant proposals, especially for the most vulnerable places in LMIC.
- Continue exploring opportunities to make the guidelines on 'Prehabilitation for People with Cancer' more widely available and consider how the findings might be projected internationally.
- Continue to establish strong stakeholder relationships and seek further opportunities to collaborate with interested stakeholders.
- Prepare for presence at conferences including WCC 2020, and consider submitting applications for sessions at other conferences including ICN 2021.
- Continue to produce additional forms of communication, including a regular newsletter, an information leaflet for conferences etc. Develop and finalise a logo for ICONIC.
- Identify and secure further funding for activities going forward (including application/s for the GACD funding call).