

Nutrition and Cancer Task Force

Report Form 2022-2023

International collaboration on nutrition in relation to cancer (ICONIC)



IUNS
INTERNATIONAL
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SCIENCES

Task Force Chair/s

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

Active Task Force Members

- Dr Alexia Alford – IAEA, Nutrition Specialist
- Dr Marc Gunter – ICL, Chair in Cancer Epidemiology
- Dr Inge Huybrechts – IARC, Scientist Nutrition and Metabolism
- Ms Shalini Jayasekar Zürn – UICC, Senior Advocacy Manager
- Dr Giota Mitrou - WCRF International, Director of Research and Innovation
- Professor Martin Wiseman - WCRF International, Medical & Scientific Adviser and UK NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration
- Associate Professor Stephen Wootton – UK NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration

Visiting

- Dr Kate Allen - WCRF International, Science and Policy Advisor

Stepped down in 2023

- Professor Catherine Geissler stepped down as she no longer serves on the IUNS Council.
New IUNS observer to be confirmed.

Has your objective(s) as a task force been modified since the original proposal? If so, please provide brief justification.

There have been no modifications to the objectives of the Task Force. ICONIC's overall aims and objectives remain as follows:

- 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.

Have the activities to be undertaken been modified since the original proposal? If so, please provide brief overview and justification.

ICONIC has continued working to build collaboration with and between those interested in the areas of nutrition and cancer. As the Task Force becomes more established and as new opportunities arise, existing activities may evolve but still fall within the original aims and objectives.

Brief overview of Activities since last annual report

ICONIC has taken practical steps towards establishing activities in several areas recognised as being fundamental for developing science and its application to improving people's lives. As a reminder, so far, we have carried forward activities around the following critical themes:

1. Building broader capability and more robust capacity for excellence in research and practice in Africa, with the longer-term ambition to develop a high-quality, context-specific research programme in this region;
2. Facilitating international collaboration and developing activities in the area of childhood cancers, with the ambition to create a Community of Practice focused on diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer in children, teenagers and young adults (CTYA) that seeks to align research and communication to advance the adoption of essential practices and better inform care for young cancer patients;
3. Establishing the particular role played by professional nutritionists in establishing school meals as a system to improve the health of school children as well as become a vehicle for broader education on the nature and origin of foods and diets, their biological functions, their relationship to health, social structures, economics and more general social connections.



4. Developing a framework for establishing prehabilitation (in terms of personalised management of exercise, nutrition and psychological support before the start of definitive treatment) formally and in the context of quality implementation science.

Task Force Meetings

Five main Task Force meetings were held between October 2022 and December 2023.

Capacity building in Africa

Cancer and Nutrition in Africa (CANA)

ICONIC has played a key role in the formation of CANA (a group within the African Nutrition Society) and continues to help facilitate and support its activities. CANA is made up of a group of extremely enthusiastic and committed African scientists who themselves completed the first pilot study for the capacity building activity to develop an online grant writing course for Africa (see below) - Dr Elom Aglago, Dr Reggie Annan, Dr Isaacs Agbemafle and Dr Keiron Audain, and the group is supported by Professor Francis Zotor. CANA also enjoys administrative support from Patience Dormedame from UHAS in Ghana, joined earlier this year by Juliet Korsah (also from UHAS). CANA continues to show commitment to advancing nutrition and cancer research in Africa as they move to becoming more established and recognised within the region. Main activities this year are outlined in the sections below. CANA has also developed its own social media policy, a logo, and is starting to put together a strategic plan for the longer term.

Cancer and Nutrition Epidemiology in Africa online grant writing course

Building on the experience of similar courses within Wageningen University, ICONIC has been working with CANA and Wageningen University to develop an online course to improve grant writing capabilities across Africa - as an imperative for the development of a high quality, relevant and context specific research programme in this region. The group continues to meet monthly to discuss management aspects of the course, as well as wider considerations related to the capacity building activity.

A pilot study was conducted early in 2021 as part of Wageningen University's ongoing distance learning programme, offering a chance to evaluate and refine the course at an early stage – the individuals that took part in this first pilot subsequently formed CANA. With support from Wageningen University and ICONIC, CANA then planned and led two further pilot courses modified to be sensitive to the African context, offered in West Africa later in 2021 and 2022. In 2023, a further course was offered, which saw twelve participants enrolled and broader representation from across Africa (Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Botswana and Uganda). CANA also recruited participants from previous cohorts as assistants to support them in the course delivery – Dr Augustin Zeba from IRSS and Dr Agatha Christine Onyango from Maseno University. This was a positive indication of the enthusiasm and commitment of these participants to the longer-term ambition.

This year's course also finished with a graduation ceremony where participants were presented with their Certificates of Attendance and allowed to provide feedback on their experience. CANA were delighted to receive some extremely positive feedback, and the experience has been considered a successful step forward in extending capability in Africa.

Summary of CANA's online grant writing courses delivered to date

Year	Cohort Trained	Participants	Countries benefited	Title of Grant Proposal
2021	1st	4	Ghana (3) Togo (1)	Nuts and cancer
2022	2nd	9	Benin (1), Ghana (4) Senegal (1), Togo (1) Kenya (1) Burkina (1)	Meat and cancer
2022	3rd	6	Kenya (2) Nigeria (1) Togo (1) Algeria (1) Ghana (1)	Processed foods and cancer risk
2023	4th	12	Kenya (5) Nigeria (2) Ghana (3) Uganda (1) Botswana (1)	Fish and cancer

With ICONIC's support, CANA will continue to build on the experience and refine the course – the plan is to continue offering the training each year to African scientists who want to gain knowledge and experience with writing grant proposals in this specialist area.

In recognition of the importance of building research capacity in Africa, the activity received further support from the UK Nutrition Society in 2023 and from the Love Hope Strength Foundation (see **Funding** section).

Establishment of a Quality Assurance Framework for cancer and nutrition in Africa

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) Working Group of ICONIC has made substantial progress this year with first steps towards developing and escalating at scale of a Quality Assurance Framework, initially for anthropometry, but eventually for other markers of nutritional well-being. The ambition is that this should be available across sub-Saharan Africa as the Quality Assurance Framework and Nutrition for Africa (QAFANA) for the collection and curation of secure nutritional data collected as part of routine services that can be used with confidence for policy, planning, monitoring and evaluation in critical areas of the health sector (cancer), the education sector (childhood obesity) and the agricultural sector (food and nutrition security).

Early in 2023, colleagues from Ghana, Dr Reginald Annan (KNUST) and Ms Patience Dormediamé (UHAS), spent two weeks with Dr Stephen Wootton and Dr Kesta Durkin at the University of

Southampton for training and competency assessment required for the level of 'trainer' so that they may become the lead in establishing exemplar reference centres in Ghana. During this visit, the necessary quality assurance structures, systems and processes were also developed. Two recognised Centres for Nutritional Assessment (CNAs) have now been established in host academic institutions in Ghana: Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi and the University of Health and Allied Sciences (UHAS) in Hohoe. Dr Annan and Ms Dormediamé have since led training and competency assessments for the first 35 students and national service personnel in these institutions. They continue to build and assess competency amongst these individuals to establish core teams within both CNAs. This initial training experience has been documented, evaluated and shown to be well-received by those receiving the training and effective at improving adherence to SOPs, confidence, accuracy, and precision.

In October 2023, Dr Wootton visited both institutions in Ghana on behalf of ICONIC, to meet with senior representatives of UHAS and KNUST to seek support for QAFANA and explore how best to work together to secure the ambition to embed quality assurance across the different Schools within each institution. Each CNA was reviewed regarding facilities, staffing, and existing equipment to sign off the CNAs.

sign off on both CNAs and to seek continued support from the senior leadership – both institutions confirmed their full support for the initiative.

On 17th October 2023, a symposium was held in Kumasi to launch QAFANA in Ghana, ahead of the annual Conference on Nutrition and Dietetics. Over 200 participants from nutrition, dietetics, and public health professionals from across the country attended the symposium with presentations from Dr Wootton, Professor Zotor, Professor Aumuna and Dr Annan. The event was well attended, with over 200 participants from across the country, including nutritionists, dietitians, public health professionals, and many senior members of academic institutions and heads of hospital units. The symposium sought to create awareness and generate support and engagement at the national level. The impact of training nutritionists and dietetic professionals using the QAFANA weight and height SOPs on their ability to follow procedures in conducting these measures was demonstrated. The symposium successfully created awareness and generated support and engagement at the national level. An immediate impact of the symposium was senior representatives from three other Universities in Ghana indicated they wished to work collaboratively with colleagues in UHAS and KNUST – The University of Accra in Legon, The University of the Cape Coast and The University for Developmental Studies in Tamale. Each University actively seeks support from the CNA teams in UHAS and KNUST to set up a schedule to train their staff. The steps required to make this a reality are being developed.

Following the exchange visits and progress made in 2023, the QAF Working Group is together identifying the necessary next steps to continue to develop the QAFANA initiative. A full report on the activity has been produced which includes details of next planned priorities and next steps (see Annex).

The first year of this activity, in 2022/23, was supported by funds from the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) International. Support for the second year has been provided by the Love Hope Strength Foundation. During this period activities will be extended to include Togo and Cameroon, with colleagues in these French-speaking African countries.

IUNS-ICN 2022

The capacity building activity in Africa formed part of ICONIC's accepted session at the IUNS International Congress on Nutrition in 2022, at which ICONIC provided an overview of its key activities to date.

African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer

ICONIC has continued its conversation with the African Organisation for Research and Training in Cancer (AORTIC) and now has secured group membership as an organisation jointly with CANA – named members are Professor Alan Jackson (voting member), Professor Francis Zotor and Dr Elom Aglago. AORTIC is dedicated to cancer control and palliation in Africa and is actively connected to a global community who contribute to its activities. AORTIC's primary focus is cancer, but it has some interest in nutrition related considerations and the opportunity to build an alliance with CANA offers the potential for reciprocal benefit for evident progress. ICONIC continues to explore opportunities for collaboration with AORTIC and was pleased to participate in a session at their conference in Senegal in November 2023, in collaboration with WHO-AFRO.

EPIC for Africa

The long-term ambition of the capacity building work remains to develop a large-scale prospective cohort epidemiological study across multiple sites in Africa - to capture the diversity of cancer sites, diversity of dietary patterns, nutritional status and physical activity, with appropriate biomarkers of nutritional status and cancer characteristics. Conceptually, the approach has been modelled on the experience of the EPIC study (European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition). It will serve to extend the range of exposures and cancers captured in the EPIC study, and by using common/similar methodologies, provide an external validation for the approach that will be of common benefit to people across both Europe and Africa, and more widely.

Financial support for the capacity building activities

Financial support was received for a second year from the UK Nutrition Society towards fellowships for the online course. In addition, WCRF helped to identify further support and £10,000 was awarded from the Love Hope Strength Foundation to support CANA's online grant writing course and also to support a second year of the QAFANA activity.

International activity in the area of nutrition and childhood cancers (CTYA activity)

In 2023, ICONIC continued to explore the best mechanism for bringing together those interested in nutrition and cancer in children, teenagers and young adults from around the world. It is recognised that the efforts of those who are working to achieve more successful outcomes would

be greatly strengthened, if relevant experience could be shared more readily, through the use of a suitable and accessible platform.

ICONIC was introduced to two organisations also committed to developing activities to enhance cancer care, especially in lower- and middle-income countries - the Cancer Warriors Foundation (Philippines) and Aladina Foundation (Spain). Together, we have been exploring how to achieve this through establishing a Community of Practice (CoP) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience in this area. We have also been working with the team responsible for the World Health Organization's Knowledge Action Portal on Non-Communicable Diseases, which offers an accessible web-based platform through which the CoP could be developed - the platform would help generate and manage a body of CTYA-specific knowledge, capture shared knowledge and international experience and seek consensus on best practices to improve the routine care of young cancer patients. In time it would be desirable to have a significant presence within the NCD platform which had a specific focus on diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer, but as a first step towards this, the intention is to use the focussed experience of CTYA as the basis for establishing such an activity.

A consultation meeting with invited stakeholders took place on 14th December, to introduce the proposal, invite comment and seek support. Over the next year, ICONIC intends to work with WHO and other partners to establish the platform and extend engagement with invited stakeholders who are interested in being part of the initiative. Over time, the intention is to make the platform more accessible to a wider audience and to the public.

A proposal has been submitted for a session on this topic at UICC's World Cancer Congress in 2024. This was also one of the topics that formed part of ICONIC's symposium at the 22nd IUNS International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) in Tokyo in December 2022.

Global Research Consortium for School Health and Nutrition

ICONIC has contributed directly to the global school feeding initiative of the School Meals Coalition launched in 2021 with the World Food Programme as the lead agency and supported by UN Nutrition. Professor Jackson sits as an observer for IUNS. ICONIC was instrumental in the formation of a Special Interest Group within the Nutrition Society and has continued to explore opportunities to collaborate with the Coalition, and its research Consortium, to improve the health, nutrition status and wellbeing of school children across LMIC, with a focus on Africa.

In 2023, as well as meetings with the SIG to discuss how to move ahead, much of the activity has been generating awareness of the ambition – including attendance at the Hidden Hunger meeting in Germany by Professor Alan Jackson (September 2023), and the FENS and FANUS meetings attended by Professor Francis Zotor (November 2023).

In collaboration with the African Nutrition Society and IMTF, ICONIC is in the process of planning towards a School Feeding for Africa workshop to be held at the time of the meeting of the Africa

Nutrition Society in Ghana during October 2024. The intention is to review progress at local, national and international levels and plan for the next phase of coordinated activity across Africa. A planning group has been established to organise the event.

Prehabilitation in delivery of cancer care

In 2019, a report was published by NIHR in collaboration with Macmillan (a cancer care charity) and the Royal College of Anaesthetists "Principles and guidance for prehabilitation within the management and support of people with cancer". ICONIC is committed to applying this guidance for widened access to structured prehabilitation for people with cancer and to consider how the recommendations might be made more accessible internationally. The report calls for a greater focus on prehabilitation, including nutrition, physical activity and psychological support, in the delivery of cancer care. To this end, on 7th December 2021, ICONIC was host for the second in a series of online Special Focus Dialogues in collaboration with UICC. This Dialogue was on prehabilitation and cancer: **Special Focus Dialogue: Prehabilitation – Multimodal interventions to improve resilience and response to treatment in cancer | UICC.**

Experts came together to share their experience in developing, implementing and evaluating prehabilitation interventions. It explored how being nutritionally, physically and psychologically 'unfit' can influence the resilience to cancer and how multimodal prehabilitation contributes to help decreasing treatment-related morbidity, increasing cancer treatment options, and improving physical and psychological health outcomes. The session was chaired by Associate Professor Stephen Wootton and speakers included Professor Franco Carli, Dr Stefan Van Rooijen and Dr Sandy Jack. The session was a success with participation from over 100 registrants.

The above report is in the process of being reviewed and updated. ICONIC is contributing by strengthening to the evidence base that informs the guidance.

Prehabilitation was also one of the topics that formed part of ICONIC's symposium at the 22nd IUNS International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) in Tokyo in December 2022.

Nutrition and breast cancer in women of African ancestry in LMIC

ICONIC reiterated its ambition to seek opportunities 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 in LMIC. While the accepted session on this area for the World Cancer Congress in 2020 did not go ahead due to the global pandemic, ICONIC intends for this planned session to form part of the series of Special Focus Dialogues in collaboration with UICC.

Conferences

IUNS-ICN 2022

ICONIC was grateful to IUNS in being able to host a symposium at the 22nd International Congress of Nutrition on Thursday 8th December 2022 – Supporting collaboration in nutrition and cancer: A global approach, The symposium provided an overview of ICONIC's work and

engaged with those interested in its activities. Topics covered were:

- Capacity building for enhanced research on nutrition and cancer in low- and middle-income countries – Professor Ellen Kampman, Wageningen University
- The role of nutrition and other lifestyle factors in paediatric oncology – Dr Inge Huybrechts, IARC
- Prehabilitation within the management and support of those living with cancer – Dr Elom Aglago, ICL and Cancer and Nutrition for Africa (CANA)

The Congress was an opportunity to meet and re-connect with colleagues and researchers from across the world. The symposium was well-attended and speakers received many positive responses both during and after the session. Dr Elom Aglago, commented: "ICN in Tokyo was a unique opportunity to network with the global nutrition community, and to discuss contemporary challenges and solutions for better nutrition. Our well-attended ICONIC session on nutrition and cancer provided an avenue for low-and-middle-income countries to consider nutrition in prevention, prehabilitation, and for support for children diagnosed with cancer. The session and the following interactions demonstrated the need for more collaboration and shared experiences and research on cancer. The conference venue was majestic, and the organisation was impeccable. A special thanks to the Tokyoites for the warm and enthusiastic welcome in their city." The abstracts from ICONIC's sessions are now published in the [Annals of Nutrition & Metabolism](#).

5th International Congress Hidden Hunger in Germany, September 2023

Professor Alan Jackson presented on "Widening Access and Ensuring Sustainability" at the 5th International Congress Hidden Hunger: Improving Food and Nutrition Security through School Feeding.

AORTIC Conference in Senegal, November 2023

ICONIC was pleased to participate in a session on nutrition and cancer at the 2023 AORTIC Conference in Senegal in November. The session was in collaboration with WHO AFRO, with Dr Laetitia Ouedraogo-Nikiema chairing the session and speaking about challenges in implementing policies and actions to promote safe and healthy eating habits and access to nutritious foods in the WHO African region. Other speakers included Professor Alan Jackson, together with Professor Francis Zotor, Dr Reggie Annan (pre-recorded presentations) and Dr Elom Aglago, all speaking about the implications of nutrition and cancer research for Africa and capacity building towards the equivalent of a large-scale EPIC (European Prospective Investigation into Nutrition and Cancer) for this region. ICONIC thanks WCRF International for sponsoring Dr Elom Aglago to attend the session.

World Cancer Congress 2024

ICONIC has submitted a proposal for a session at the World Cancer Congress in 2024 on Co-creating a new knowledge-sharing platform on nutrition and cancer for children, teenagers and

young adults (CTYA). It is proposed that Ms Carmen Auste from the Cancer Warriors Foundation will Chair the session and other proposed speakers to include colleagues from WCRF and WHO.

UICC Virtual Dialogues

Following successful collaboration with UICC on hosting a series of Special Focus Dialogues in 2021, ICONIC continues to work with UICC to identify timely opportunities for similar events as the various activities evolve.

Communications / Publications

• Abstracts

The abstracts from ICONIC's session at the IUNS-ICN 2022 are now published in the [Annals of Nutrition & Metabolism](#).

• Newsletter

Three newsletters were published between October 2022 and December 2023. See links below to newsletters issued since last report in October 2022:

- o Autumn 2022 [ICONIC's Autumn News 2022 \(mailchimp\)](#)
- o Spring 2023 [ICONIC's Spring 2023 News \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)
- o Autumn 2023 [🍁ICONIC's Autumn 2023 News \(campaign-archive.com\)](#)

• Twitter

ICONIC's Twitter account remained active in 2023 and with now 180 followers (20% increase since last report) – although time for this activity is often limited, the aim through this social media platform is to continue to engage with interested stakeholders and keep them informed of activities.

• Website

ICONIC's webpage hosted by the NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration (<https://cancerandnutrition.nihr.ac.uk/international-nutrition-and-cancer-task-force/>) remains live and is updated regularly. The webpage includes a contact form for individuals to get in touch, via ICONIC's active email account (nutritionandcancer@wcrf.org).

• Other publications in 2023:

IUNS News [ICONIC's Autumn Progress Update · International Union of Nutritional Sciences \(iuns.org\)](#)

Funding

In 2023, ICONIC secured further support from WCRF (5,000 Euros) and UICC (2,200 Euros) towards the operational costs of ICONIC. With IUNS agreement for ICONIC to continue as a Task Force until 2025, it also agreed to allocated \$10,000 for this term.

Funding for specific activities

- Capacity Building in Africa – The UK Nutrition Society supported three further fellowships for participation in the capacity building course (3x £5,000) in 2023. It is expected that this will be available for a third year for 2024. The Love Hope Strength Foundation also donated £1,500 to help cover the online course applications fees for African scientists applying for the 2023 course delivered by CANA.



- Quality Assurance Framework – The Love Hope Strength Foundation (via WCRF) agreed to support the second year of planned activity to further develop the QAFANA activity and specifically to extend to French-speaking African countries with colleagues in Togo and Cameroon (£8,500).

Stakeholder activity

ICONIC continued to keep in touch with stakeholders, through the newsletter, Twitter and other forms of communication.

Please list any successes accomplished during this period (aligned with proposed measures of success from original proposal, or include justification for modifications).

Please see below a list of successes for the period October 2022-December 2023 (details given in previous section):

Capacity building in Africa

- CANA starting to become a stronger, more well-established group - recruitment of additional administrative support as well as the assistance from participants from previous cohorts to further support its activities. CANA developed its own social media policy and is looking to operationalise in 2024.

CANA Cancer and Nutrition Epidemiology online grant writing course

- Monthly meetings between ICONIC, CANA and Wageningen University to discuss issues related to development and management of the course.
- Course was further refined and a fourth course was offered and led by CANA in 2023.
 - o 12 participants enrolled.
 - o Broader representation from across Africa (Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Botswana and Uganda).
 - o Course led by CANA with support from Wageningen University colleagues this time mainly for the review process.
 - o Participants from previous cohorts were recruited to assist CANA - a positive indication of the enthusiasm and commitment of these participants to the longer-term ambition.
 - o CANA received very positive feedback and the experience has been considered a successful step forward in extending capability in Africa.
- Secured funding from the Love Hope Strength Foundation to cover the application fees of the 12 participants (£1,500).

Quality Assurance Framework and Nutrition for Africa (QAFANA)

- Successfully delivered on commitments for the first year of the QAFANA activity (funded by WCRF):
 - o Completed exchange visit Ghana/UK:
 1. Dr Reginald Annan (KNUST) and Ms Patience Dormediamé (UHAS) to the University of Southampton for training and competency assessment required for the trainer level, and to develop quality assurance structures, systems and processes for the activity in Ghana.
 2. Dr Stephen Wootton to Ghana on behalf of ICONIC to sign off on both CNAs and to seek continued support from the senior leadership in the two institutions.
 - o Two recognised Centres for Nutritional Assessment (CNAs) were established in host academic institutions in Ghana: KNUST and UHAS.
 - o Training and competency assessments of 35 students and national service personnel in the above institutions, which was evaluated and documented. They are continuing to build and assess competency and establish core teams within both CNAs and seek supply of equipment to deliver the training.
- Delivered a training workshop on QAFANA at the Conference on Nutrition and Dietetics (COND) to create awareness of the activity and its objectives among the Ghana Association of Nutritionists and Dieticians (GAND) - over 200 participants from across Ghana. Generated support and engagement at the national level, and attracted wider attention, being reported by local media.
- Received interest from three other universities in Ghana who wish to work collaboratively with colleagues in UHAS and KNUST – The University of Accra in Legon, The University of the Cape Coast and The University for Developmental Studies in Tamale.
- Secured funding (£8,500) for a second year of the activity from the Love Hope Strength Foundation, which will support extending the activity to Togo and Cameroon, with colleagues in these French-speaking countries – planning is underway.
- Started to consider plans for Year 3 and beyond.

IUNS-ICN 2022

- The capacity building activity in Africa formed part of ICONIC's accepted session at the IUNS International Congress on Nutrition in 2022, at which ICONIC provided an overview of its key activities to date.

AORTIC

- ICONIC/CANA successfully registered as a Group Member of AORTIC in 2023 and continued to explore opportunities for collaboration.
- ICONIC/CANA were pleased to participate in a session at the AORTIC conference in Senegal in November 2023, in collaboration with WHO-AFRO (see **Conferences**).

EPIC for Africa

- ICONIC started thinking about establishing a Working Group in 2024, specifically tasked with planning towards the ambition for an EPIC for Africa.

CTYA cancer and nutrition

- ICONIC continued to explore the best mechanism for bringing together those interested in nutrition and cancer in children, teenagers and young adults. In November 2022, an introduction was made (by UICC) to the Cancer Warriors Foundation in the Philippines, and subsequently the Aladina Foundation in Spain – both organisations also have an interest in this area, particularly in LMICs.
- Collaboration began between the three organisations to consider how the above could be achieved by establishing a Community of Practice (CoP) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience in this area.
- Introduction was later made to the team responsible for the World Health Organization's Knowledge Action Portal (KAP) on Non-Communicable Diseases, which offers an accessible web-based platform through which to develop the CoP. Positive reactions were received from the relevant WHO departments and enthusiasm was high.
- Plans are already underway to start building the CoP on the WHO KAP and a meeting is planned to, invite comments on the proposal and seek support.
- A proposal was submitted for a session on this topic at UICC's World Cancer Congress in 2024.

School feeding

- Generated awareness of the ambition, including attendance at the Hidden Hunger meeting in Germany by Professor Alan Jackson (September 2023), and the FENS and FANUS meetings attended by Professor Francis Zotor (November 2023).
- Developed a proposal for a School Feeding for Africa workshop to be held at the time of the meeting of the Africa Nutrition Society in Ghana during October 2024, to review progress at local, national and international levels and plan for the next phase of coordinated activity across Africa.
- Established a group to begin planning for the Workshop in 2024.

Events

- 22nd International Congress of Nutrition, December 2022 – ICONIC hosted a symposium Supporting collaboration in nutrition and cancer: A global approach, the aim of which was to provide an overview of ICONIC's work and engage with those interested in its activities.
- 5th International Congress Hidden Hunger: Improving Food and Nutrition Security through School Feeding in September 2023 – Alan Jackson presented on "Widening Access and Ensuring Sustainability".
- 2023 AORTIC Conference in Senegal in November – ICONIC participated in a session on Nutrition and Cancer in collaboration with WHO AFRO, supported by WCRF.
- Professor Francis Zotor attended the 14th European Nutrition Conference FENS and 5th Federation of African Nutrition Societies (FANUS) conference in November 2023 at which he promoted ICONIC/CANA's activities.

- World Cancer Congress 2024 – ICONIC has submitted a proposal for a session at the WCC 2024 on Co-creating a new knowledge-sharing platform on nutrition and cancer for children, teenagers and young adults (CTYA).

Publications

- Abstracts published in Annals of Nutrition & Metabolism from ICONIC's session at the IUNS-ICN 2022.
- Three newsletters published between October 2022 and December 2023 keeping interested readers informed of activities.
- Other publications included IUNS News ICONIC's Autumn Progress Update · International Union of Nutritional Sciences (iuns.org)

Other

- ICONIC secured further funding for its operational activities from WCRF and UICC for 2023. Financial support for specific activities was also secured including from the UK Nutrition Society (for the online course for Africa) and Love Hope Strength Foundation (for both the second year of the QAFANA work plan and online course).
- Increased number of Twitter followers by 20%.
- Webpages hosted by the NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration kept up to date with activities.

Please mention your plans for the coming year and how they have been adapted based on success to date (if appropriate).

ICONIC's immediate priorities will be to take forward activities around the following critical themes:

- Building broader capability and more robust capacity for excellence in research and practice in Africa, with the longer-term ambition to develop a high-quality, context-specific research programme in this region;
- Facilitating international collaboration and developing activities in the area of childhood cancers, with the ambition to create a Community of Practice focused on diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer in children, teenagers and young adults (CTYA) that seeks to align research and communication to advance the adoption of essential practices and better inform care for young cancer patients;
- Establishing the particular role played by professional nutritionists in establishing school meals as a system to improve the health of school children as well as become a vehicle for broader education on the nature and origin of foods and diets, their biological functions, their relationship to health, social structures, economics and more general social connections.
- Developing a framework for establishing prehabilitation (in terms of personalised management of exercise, nutrition and psychological support before the start of definitive treatment) formally and in the context of quality implementation science.

Specifically, ICONIC will:

- Provide continued support to CANA for the grant writing course and other related activities, as well as to develop its own strategic plan going forward. This includes moving towards a platform that not only delivers the course but will enable a wider ongoing engagement within some form of community of practice.
- Continue to facilitate and lead the QAF Working Group's activities to deliver the plan for Year 2 of the activity and beyond (see CANA's report outlining next steps in Annex).
- Continue to explore opportunities to collaborate with AORTIC and embed nutrition activities within its work.
- Following collaboration with WHO-AFRO for the session at the AORTIC conference in Senegal, explore opportunities for aligning activities on nutrition and cancer with WHO-AFRO.
- Look to establish a Working Group for planning towards an African Prospective Investigation into Cancer (APIC) for Africa by 2030.
- Continue collaborating with WHO, Cancer Warriors Foundation and Aladina Foundation to build a Community of Practice (CoP) to help generate and manage a body of CTYA-specific knowledge, capture shared knowledge and international experience, and seek consensus on best practices to improve the routine care of young cancer patients. Consider how to extend the activity to have a significant presence within the NCD platform with a specific focus on diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer.
- Begin planning for a session on the CTYA activity at UICC's World Cancer Congress 2024, if proposal is accepted.

Plan for the School Feeding for Africa workshop to be held at the time of the meeting of the Africa Nutrition Society in Ghana during October 2024, to review progress at local, national and international levels and plan for the next phase of coordinated activity across Africa.

It will also continue to:

- Plan and deliver further online sessions as part UICC's Virtual Dialogue series (to include potential sessions on CTYA activity, nutrition and breast cancer, capacity building).
- Explore opportunities to progress activity in the area of nutrition and breast cancer in women of African ancestry in LMIC (including further seeking opportunities for funding and a potential topic for another Special Focus Dialogue in the series).
- Establish strong stakeholder relationships and seek further opportunities to collaborate.
- Develop/improve existing communications (e.g. Twitter, newsletter, webpage) to keep stakeholders informed of activity and raise further awareness of the Task Force.
- Identify and secure further funding for activities going forward, and consider how ICONIC might move towards becoming an independent entity by the end of its term in 2025.

Annexe

Development of a Quality Assurance Framework and Nutrition for Africa (QAFANA) - Year 1 Progress Report (2022-2023)

Introduction

There have been repeated calls for a renewed emphasis on the value of high-quality anthropometric assessment by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to produce credible, objective, valid and equivalent information that decision-makers can use confidently. There are identified needs for a) Standardisation of measurement methodology and protocols, b) defined training and demonstrable competency of those responsible for making and supervising measurements, and c) for measures to be conducted within a Quality Assurance Framework that provides the necessary structures and systems to monitor performance and fidelity against defined processes.

The Quality Assurance Working Group of ICONIC (International Collaboration on Nutrition in relation to Cancer) have been tasked to develop and implement a Quality Assurance Framework for Africa to be made available across sub-Saharan Africa (QAFA-Africa). ICONIC is a task force of IUNS and QAFANA has been set up under the aegis of the African Nutrition Society (ANS). Our main goal is to develop the systems, structures and processes operating within a Quality Assurance Framework for the assessment of nutritional state – QAFA - to establish a trained and demonstrably competent nutrition workforce who would produce credible, objective, valid, equivalent & compelling data and information for use by decision-makers to focus on nutrition programming appropriately to meet the needs of the population.

Our progress over year 1.

As a first step, QAFANA focuses on using anthropometric measures of stature, weight and circumference of infants, children and adults. This framework embraces all aspects of quality assurance, including leadership and governance, quality manuals and standard operating procedures, equipment, training materials and the delivery of competency-based assessment, monitoring and evaluation. After that, attention will be directed towards other developing quality assurance frameworks for assessing dietary intake and physical activity.

Prof. Reginald Annan of the Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) and Mrs. Patience Dormedjame of the Fred. N. Binka School of Public Health (FNBSPH, UHAS) spent two weeks at the University of Southampton with Dr Steve Wootton and Dr Kesta Durkin for training and competency assessment required for the level of 'trainer' so that they may become the lead in establishing exemplar reference centres in Ghana. These centres will be situated in KNUST and UHAS. These discussions on the scope, nature and strategy around introducing such an activity were aided by one-day visits during their stay from Prof Francis Zotor (UHAS, Ghana), Dr Elom Aglago (Imperial College, London) and Ms Rachel Marklew (ICONIC).

Two recognised Centres for Nutritional Assessment (CNAs) in KNUST and UHAS supported by the host academic institutions have been established. The necessary quality assurance structures, systems and processes have been developed. Core teams have been established within each Centre for Nutritional Assessment (CNA) who have gained experience and some level of competence. As we advance, we plan on building confidence and increasing competence by measuring a cohort of undergraduates in each centre. This experience will be monitored and evaluated and used to assess and refine the training programme.

The first 35 students and national service personnel have been trained. This initial training experience has been documented, evaluated and shown to be well-received by those receiving the training and effective at improving adherence to SOPs, confidence, accuracy, and precision. The following line of action is to build and assess competency among these trainees and acquire the associated equipment to deliver the QAFA.

Dr Steve Wootton made a 10-day visit to Ghana to meet with senior representatives of UHAS and KNUST to seek support for QAFANA and explore how best we might work together to secure the ambition to embed quality assurance across the different Schools within each institution. Each CNA was reviewed regarding facilities, staffing, and existing equipment to sign off the CNAs.

On 17th October 2023, a symposium was held in Kumasi to launch QAFANA in Ghana, ahead of the annual Conference on Nutrition and Dietetics. Over 200 participants from nutrition, dietetics, and public health professionals from across the country attended the symposium with presentations from Dr Wootton, Prof Zotor, Prof Aumuna and Prof Annan (see Appendix 1). Senior members of academic institutions and heads of hospital and community units participated in the symposium. The symposium sought to create awareness and generate support and engagement at the national level. The impact of training nutritionists and dietetic professionals using the QAFANA weight and height SOPs on their ability to follow procedures in conducting these measures was demonstrated. The symposium successfully created awareness and generated support and engagement at the national level. An immediate impact of the symposium was senior representatives from three other Universities in Ghana indicated they wished to work collaboratively with colleagues in UHAS and KNUST – The University of Ghana in Legon, The University of the Cape Coast and The University for Development Studies in Tamale. Each University actively seeks support from the CNA teams in UHAS and KNUST to set up a schedule to train their staff. The steps required to make this a reality are being developed.

Planned activities scheduled to be achieved in Year 2 by the end of 2024

1. Establish a national steering group for Ghana with representation from all key stakeholders across five Universities (UHAS, KNUST, University of Ghana, University of Cape Coast, University for Development Studies in Tamale), the professional body (Ghana Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics - GAND), the Ghana Health Service and ICONIC.

2. The steering group will have responsibility to:
 - a. Develop and agree on a Terms of Reference and formalise participation with an MOU for each participating centre between partners and ICONIC.
 - b. Develop a common MOU between the institution(s) and ICONIC.
 - c. Develop and agree on a joint work plan with deliverables and timelines.
 - d. Conduct and report on current training and workforce needs across Nutrition, Dietetics, Public Health, Medicine and Nursing.
 - e. Consider and develop a pathway to accreditation (GAND?).
 - f. Develop and consider routes to funding and sustainability:
3. Seek support and work with the Director of Nutrition within the Ghana Health Service to train the Regional Nutrition Officers (n16) to demonstrate their competency and engage in a Train the Trainers program so that they can roll out the training for the District Nutrition Officers (n250) in year 2-3.
4. Seek support and endorsement from the Ghana Health Services, Ministry of Health and Allied Health Council, which licenses Nutrition and Dietetic professionals to demonstrate competency in anthropometric measures in nutritional assessment.
5. Each CNA will develop an approach to training within the undergraduate programme for all final-year students (KNUST n~50; UHAS n~80). A subset of students (25 from each centre) will participate in a study to examine the effectiveness of the training through repeated standardisation tests before, immediately after and after three months of training.
6. The core teams from UHAS and KNUST will prepare and submit two papers for publication– the first on the need for a QAFANA and the second on the effectiveness of the training program.
7. The progress will be presented at ANEC 2024 as both a presentation and a workshop to demonstrate the effect of training.

Other activities

Aside QAFANAs activities, ICONIC together with CANA (Cancer and Nutrition for Africa) ensures the running of an annual online grant writing course in cancer and epidemiology focusing specifically on nutrition. The emphasis of this is to train African researchers and endowing them with the skills and ability to write good grant proposals that will be competitive enough globally to get funding. The details of this activity is captured in a separate document.