

Nutrition and Cancer Task Force

Report Form 2024

International Collaboration on Nutrition in relation to cancer (ICONIC)



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 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
- NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration
- Associate Professor Stephen Wootton – UK NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration

Ex-officio: Professor Francis Zotor, Vice President IUNS, joined as representative to the Task Force for IUNS Council in March 2024.

Visiting

- Dr Kate Allen - WCRF International, Science and Policy Advisor
- Professor Martin Wiseman stepped down from his role as Medical & Scientific Adviser for the World Cancer Research Fund in 2024, so no longer serves as representative for WCRF, but continues as an occasional advisor.
- Dr Marc Gunter stepped down from his role at IARC to take up the role of Chair in Cancer Epidemiology at Imperial College London and replaced by Dr Inge Huybrechts as representative for IARC.

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;
- 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 have evolved but still fall within the original aims and objectives.

Brief overview of Activities since last annual report

In 2024, ICONIC has continued to work towards establishing activities in several areas recognised as being fundamental for developing science and its application to improving people's lives. This includes 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, in order to create an international Community of Practice with a focus on diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer in children, teenagers and young adults (CTYA). This community of practice is building the alignment of 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 preventing cancer by 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, cancer, social structures, economics and wider social connections.



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

The sections below provide an update on key activities :

Task Force Meetings

Four Task Force meetings were held between January and December 2024. Professor Francis Zotor joined as representative for IUNS from March 2024.

Capacity building in Africa

Cancer and Nutrition in Africa (CANA)

ICONIC continues to support CANA (a group within the African Nutrition Society) helping to facilitate the annual course on capacity building and other activities. The course enhances capability in the preparation of grant applications and is now organised by committed African scientists who participated in the first pilot - Professor Reggie Annan, Dr Isaacs Agbemafle, Dr Keiron Audain, Dr Elom Aglago, together with Dr Agatha Onyango and Dr Calistus Wilunda, who graduated from the course more recently. Professor Francis Zotor continues to provide oversight for the group, with administrative supported from Patience Dormediamé and Juliet Korsah.

Overall management of the course takes place at a monthly meeting of ICONIC with CANA, representation from Wageningen University and observer representation from the World Cancer Research Fund. The course has been offered to African scientists on a regular basis over five years. To date 39 participants have come from 13 countries (see below) and their written evaluations at the end of each course indicate that the course is fit for purpose, fulfilling aspirations and well accepted by those taking part.

Year	Cohort Trained	Participants	Countries	Topic for grant proposal
2021	1 st	4	Ghana (3) Togo (1)	Nuts and cancer
2022	2 nd	9	Benin (1), Ghana (4) Senegal (1), Togo (1) Kenya (1) Burkina (1)	Meat and cancer
2022	3 rd	6	Kenya (2) Nigeria (1) Togo (1) Algeria (1) Ghana (1)	Processed foods and cancer risk
2023	4 th	12	Kenya (5) Nigeria (2) Ghana (3) Uganda (1) Botswana (1)	Fish and cancer
2024	5 th	8	Kenya (4) Ethiopia (1) Ghana (1) Malawi (1) Rwanda (1)	Sugary drinks and cancer



Securing funding for research in Africa

The potential impact of the course is reflected in its success with a competitive international grant award. A team led by Professor Reggie Annan successfully secured a project grant from the World Cancer Research Fund as part of their Regular Grant Programme, to investigate aspects of breast cancer among sub-Saharan women (see: [Our 1st grants in Ghana and on brain cancer among £4m of new research | World Cancer Research Fund and Metabolic syndrome, gut microbiome, and breast cancer risk in Sub-Saharan African women | World Cancer Research Fund](#)).

During 2024, ICONIC proposed a keynote speaker for ICN 2025 - Professor Elio Riboli who was responsible for establishing EPIC - to speak about the challenges and experience in the context of setting up an EPIC for Africa. We are pleased that this proposal was accepted and CANA is exploring the opportunity to meet Professor Riboli during the ICN to discuss this longer-term ambition.

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

The Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) Working Group of ICONIC made further progress this year towards developing and escalating at scale of a Quality Assurance Framework, initially for anthropometry. In time, this should be available across sub-Saharan Africa and integrated into the routine collection of data within the delivery of services, as the Quality Assurance Framework and Nutrition for Africa (QAFANA). This will enable the collection and curation of secure nutritional data collected as part of routine services - to 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).

Successful exchange visits to Ghana took place in 2023 (funded by WCRF) and progress has been consolidated during 2024. Activities include extension of training locally and the preparation of materials necessary for governance, administration, and specific standard operating procedures. The first reference standard for length and mass were manufactured and validated locally, in collaboration with the Engineering Department at the Kwame Nkrumah University for Science and Technology.

Plans are in place to complete the second year of funded activity (funded by the Love Hope Strength Foundation). This comprises consolidation of activities in Ghana amongst five Universities, the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (GAND), the Ghana Health Service and wider professional and government representatives, and extension of the activity to French-speaking African countries (for example Togo and Cameroon). Future plans on how training and competency certification can be taken to scale were discussed during a visit to Ghana at the time of the 9th African Nutrition Conference in October 2024, by Professor Jackson and Associate Professor Wootton, Professor Paul Amuna and Professor Francis Zotor. This will be facilitated through the completion of the QAFANA Quality Manual, and the governance frameworks against the secure operational base being established in Ghana. The progressive building of these structures and capabilities during 2024 gives a measure of confidence that with time the activities will become securely embedded.



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International activity in the area of nutrition and childhood cancers (CTYA) – Community of Practice on the WHO Knowledge Action Portal (KAP)

ICONIC has remained committed to facilitating a mechanism for bringing together those interested in nutrition and cancer in children, teenagers and young adults (CTYA) 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, together with the Aladina Foundation in Spain and Cancer Warriors Foundation in the Philippines, explored how this might be achieved through establishing a Community of Practice (CoP) to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experience in this area. In 2023, we were introduced to Dr Samuel Sieber from the WHO's Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (GCM/NCD), who offered to host a CoP on WHO's readily accessible web-based platform – the WHO Knowledge Action Portal on Non-Communicable Diseases (KAP). ICONIC has worked with Dr Samuel Sieber over the last year to develop the community, starting with existing templates used by other KAP communities. Over the year, ICONIC has sought to consult stakeholders on its development, with four further stakeholder meetings in March, June, September and December to invite comment and seek support and engagement.

In August 2024, an Editorial Board was formed to manage content and keep the platform up to date. This includes major stakeholders with representation from both HIC and LMIC. Current members include Professor Judy Shoeman (SIOP), Michelle Walters (IIPAN), Dr Kokou Amegan-Aho (UHAS), Dr Lofty-John Anyanwu (Bayero University Kano and Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital Kano, Nigeria) and Deepa Puttaswamy (IAEA), together with Associate Professor Wootton and Professor Jackson and Rachel Marklew.

The new community Nutrition and Cancer in Children, Teenagers and Young Adults (CTYA) is now open to all those interested in sharing knowledge and experience in relation to diet, nutrition, physical activity and cancer in CTYA. Initially we shall establish a sustainable collaborative network of clinicians and researchers, to seek consensus on best practices and work together to improve the routine care of young cancer patients. In time, we shall provide space for young people with cancer and their families/carers to exchange experiences and share concerns to be addressed.

The platform enables the community to share resources, information about events and activity updates, and includes discussion features to promote dialogue, initially via a Noticeboard. A Nutrition and Cancer User Collection has also been created for public access (rather than just to members of the community) which links to resources elsewhere on the KAP as well as externally: [Nutrition and cancer: a resource collection | Knowledge Action Portal on NCDs](#).

ICONIC will continue working with WHO and others to develop the platform and extend engagement - the collective views of the community continue to be important and the team welcomes ideas for new features and what resources can be shared. Early in 2025 we hope to launch a community knowledge repository, which will include curated content of interest to the community ordered under a series of headings, and other features such as a stakeholder mapping tool which will be of value to the community in terms of networking. Over the next year, the intention is also to establish two committees, one to continue with operational management and the other to have more strategic oversight.

See details of events linked to the CTYA activity in the Conferences section.

School Health and Nutrition

ICONIC played a major role in planning a **Regional Workshop on School Nutrition**, convened by the African Nutrition Society at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana in October 2024, as a pre-conference to the 9th Africa Nutrition Conference (ANEC).

ICONIC formed a Planning Committee to promote the professionalisation of nutrition within the global agenda for school health and nutrition. From December 2023 monthly meetings prepared for all aspects of the Workshop which gathered academics, researchers, development partners, NGOs, and policymakers from Africa and beyond, Progress was reviewed at local, national and international levels with a focus on the role professional nutritionists might play, especially within Africa.

Prehabilitation in delivery of cancer care

In 2019, National Institutes for Health Research, Macmillan (a cancer care charity) and the Royal College of Anaesthetists published a report "Principles and guidance for prehabilitation within the management and support of people with cancer". The report called for a greater focus on prehabilitation, including nutrition, physical activity and psychological support, in the delivery of cancer care and is in the process of being reviewed and revised.

ICONIC in collaboration with UICC presented a **Special Focus Dialogue** on this area in 2021, and gave a **presentation** at the ICN 2022 in Tokyo. The report is in the process of being revised and ICONIC remains involved with special concern about how best practice might be made available for LMIC.

Conferences

World Cancer Congress, 17-19 September 2024

In collaboration with the Cancer Warriors Foundation, the World Health Organization and the World Cancer Research Fund International, ICONIC prepared a pre-recorded session for the digital component of the World Cancer Congress in Geneva, 17-19 September 2024 – the session was titled Co-creating a new knowledge-sharing platform on nutrition and cancer for children, teenagers and young adults (CTYA). It aimed to introduce the Nutrition and Cancer in Children, Teenagers and Young Adults (CTYA) Community of Practice hosted on the WHO Knowledge Action Portal on NCDs (see above). Specific learning objectives included:

1. Understanding the benefits conferred by diet, nutrition and physical activity before, during and after treatment for children and young adults affected by cancer as part of lifelong care.
2. Appreciating the value of establishing a Community of Practice to draw together evidence and share the experience of children and young adults and their parents and carers with clinicians to promote better practice through the WHO KAP.
3. Understanding the importance of standardising data collection and curation during routine clinical care, better comparing experiences amongst different contexts, more effectively generating data fit for the research, and helping guide clinical decision-making.

The session was chaired by Ms Carmen Auste (Cancer Warriors Foundation) and speakers included Associate Professor Stephen Wootton (ICONIC), Dr Helen Croker (WCRF), Dr Samuel Sieber (WHO) and Professor Alan Jackson (ICONIC).

Africa Nutrition Society's School Health and Nutrition Workshop (pre-conference Workshop to the 9th African Nutrition Conference ANEC), 5-6 October 2024

ICONIC supported the African Nutrition Society to convene a Workshop to review progress in the area of school feeding in Africa at local, national and international levels and plan for the next phase of coordinated activity across Africa – specifically considering the role professional nutritionists might play (see more in section on School Health and Nutrition above). At this meeting, presentations were also given on CANA's activities, the QAFANA activity, and the activity to establish and community of practice for nutrition and cancer in CTYA.

9th African Nutrition Conference (ANEC 2024), 7-11 October 2024

A series of presentations related to ICONIC's activities were also delivered during the main 9th African Nutrition Conference in Ghana.

UICC Special Focus Dialogue, 25 November 2024

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

On 25th November 2024, ICONIC hosted the second Special Focus Dialogue on nutrition and cancer in CTYA: Nutrition and cancer in children, teens and young adults - Current understanding and opportunities for collaboration. The session was chaired by Associate Professor Stephen Wootton who also spoke about the need for a community of practice in this area. Professor Alan Jackson also talked about structuring care through a nutritional lens, and Rachel Marklew explained the approach giving a demonstration of the new community on the WHO Knowledge Action Portal.

IUNS-ICN Paris 2025

ICONIC was invited by IUNS to submit a proposal for a symposium at ICN 2025 in Paris and initially proposed a session around the CTYA activity.

Communications / Publications

- Newsletter

Two newsletters were published between January and December 2024. See links below:

[ICONIC's Spring 2024 News](#)

[A 2024 round-up and festive wishes from ICONIC!](#)

- X

ICONIC's X account remained active in 2024 and although time was again limited for this activity, 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).

Funding

In 2024, ICONIC secured further support from WCRF (5,000 Euros) and UICC (2,200 Euros) towards the operational costs of ICONIC.

Funding for specific activities included:

- Capacity Building in Africa – The UK Nutrition Society contributed a £2,500 to support CANA's online grant writing course.

Stakeholder activity

ICONIC continued to keep in touch with stakeholders, through the newsletter, X 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 January 2024-December 2024 (details given in previous section):

ICONIC Main Committee

- Four productive main Task Force meetings between January and December 2024.
- Professor Francis Zotor joined the Task Force as representative for IUNS.

Capacity building in Africa

- CANA continued as an established and committed group, with recruitment of additional support from its alumni to the core team, including Dr Agatha Onyango and Dr Calistus Wilunda.

Cancer and Nutrition Epidemiology in Africa online grant writing course

- Monthly meetings between ICONIC, CANA and Wageningen University to discuss issues related to development and management of the course.
- A fourth course was offered and led by CANA in 2024.

8 participants enrolled

Participants for the first time from Ethiopia, Malawi and Rwanda

New core members of CANA from the alumni leading a group of participants for the online course

- First successful competitive international grant from WCRF awarded to Professor Reggie Annan reflecting the potential impact of the online course.
- Proposal accepted for Professor Elio Riboli to be a keynote speaker at ICN 2025 to speak about the challenges and experience in the context of setting up an EPIC for Africa.

Quality Assurance Framework and Nutrition for Africa (QAFANA)

- Progress was consolidated during 2024 with activities including extension of training locally and the preparation of materials necessary for governance, administration, and specific standard operating procedures.
- The first reference standards for length and mass were manufactured and validated locally, in collaboration with the Engineering Department at the Kwame Nkrumah University for Science and Technology.
- Agreements were made with three other Universities that also lead on nutrition, dietetics and public health, to work with UHAS and KNUST to secure the QAFANA activity.
- Plans are in place to complete Years 2 and 3 of funded activity by the end of 2025.

Nutrition and Cancer in CTYA

- In collaboration with WHO, established a new Nutrition and Cancer in CTYA Community of Practice on the WHO Knowledge Action Portal on NCDs.
- Held four stakeholder consultations to invite comment and seek support and engagement.
- Established an Editorial Board to manage content and keep the platform up to date, including major stakeholders with representation from both HIC and LMIC.

School Health and Nutrition

- Played a major role in planning the Regional Workshop on School Health and Nutrition, convened by the African Nutrition Society at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana in October 2024, as a pre-conference to the 9th Africa Nutrition Conference (ANEC), including facilitating meetings for all aspects of planning the Workshop.

Prehabilitation in delivery of cancer care

- Continues to be involved in the update of the 2019 report with special concern about how best practice might be made available for LMIC,

Conferences

- Submitted a pre-recorded digital session for the World Cancer Congress in September 2024 in collaboration with Cancer Warriors Foundation, WHO and WCRF.
- Supported the African Nutrition Society to convene the School Health and Nutrition Workshop to review progress in the area of school feeding in Africa at local, national and international levels and plan for the next phase of coordinated activity across Africa. At this meeting, presentations were also given on CANA's activities, the QAFANA activity, and the activity to establish a community of practice for nutrition and cancer in CTYA.
- Successful delivery of a second Special Focus Dialogue around the CTYA activity, hosted in collaboration with UICC in November 2024.
- Submitted an initial proposal to IUNS for a symposium at ICN 2025 in Paris with a focus on the CTYA activity.

Communications

- Two newsletters published between January and December 2024
- ICONIC's X account remained active in 2024 with the aim to continue to engage with interested stakeholders and keep them informed of activities.
- ICONIC's webpage hosted by the NIHR Cancer and Nutrition Collaboration updated regularly.

Funding

ICONIC secured further funding for its operational activities from WCRF and UICC for 2024. Support was also received from the UK Nutrition Society to support CANA's online grant writing course.

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

We recognise ICONIC's second term as an IUNS Task Force comes to an end in August 2025 and over the next period will give careful consideration as to if or how its activities might continue beyond this term.

Meanwhile, immediate priorities will be to continue activities around the critical themes outlined on page 2, and specifically:

- 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.
- Continue to facilitate and lead the QAF Working Group's activities to ensure the activity is securely embedded in Ghana and use the experience to demonstrate the value of training and quality assurance. Also deliver the outstanding commitments for Year 2 of the activity and consider what is needed going forward including a QAF for dietary diversity.
- Continue working with WHO and others to develop the Nutrition and Cancer in CTYA CoP on the KAP and extend engagement. We will also seek to establish two committees, one operational and one to have more strategic oversight.
- Work with the ANS ad hoc group following the School Health and Nutrition Workshop in Ghana to prepare a formal report to capture and consolidate the experience and make recommendations.
- Begin planning the next in a series of Special Focus Dialogues with UICC in March 2025, and others for later in 2025.
- Plan for a symposium at the ICN in Paris in 2025 with a focus on the CTYA activity.
- Continue to establish strong stakeholder relationships and seek further opportunities to collaborate.
- Develop/improve existing communications (e.g. X, newsletter, webpage) to keep stakeholders informed of activity and raise further awareness of the Task Force.