



THE NUTRITION SOCIETY GAZETTE

Winter 2020



**A YEAR
AGO, WHO
WOULD HAVE
THOUGHT?**

- Presidents update
- The 2021 conference programme
- Have healthy sustainable diets become more relevant in the wake of COVID-19?

Contents

From The President	3
A busy year for the Society's journals	4
The 2021 Conference Programme	5
Nutrition Greats: Sir John Boyd Orr	6
CEO Update	9
Honorary Fellow: Professor Hilary Powers	10
Nutrition Society Training Academy	11
Membership Matters	12
Nutrition and Dietetic Profession in Pakistan	13
A day in the life of...	14
Have healthy, sustainable diets become more relevant in the wake of COVID-19?	15
Student Section update	16
Daphne Jackson Fellowship sponsored by the Nutrition Society	17
Update from the Irish and Scottish Section	18
Theme Leader Update	19
Training and Events	20

Colour Key

UPDATES

EVENTS

HISTORY

SECTIONS

MEMBERSHIP



www.nutritionociety.org

The Nutrition Society is a Registered Charity whose aim is to advance the study of nutrition and its application to the maintenance of human and animal health. Registered Charity no: 27207, Company Limited by Guarantee, registered in Cardiff, no: 1274585

Editorial

Dr Carrie Ruxton, Editor in Chief

Our respective worlds may have shrunk but opportunities remain. This afternoon, I felt a bit flat after hearing that my local area would be moving to a higher tier of restrictions. But having sat down to read all the contributions to this Gazette – as I do for every issue – I'm no longer down in the (Covid) dumps.

From our Chief Executive's article (page 9) to the reflection on this year's successful scientific meetings (page 5), it's clear how much the Nutrition Society has achieved over the past year and more. It's great to read, too, about the career of one of our Fellows (page 10) and learn from the research of the IGD about how the pandemic is shaping our food habits (page 15).

The wonderful article on Boyd Orr (pages 6-8) demonstrates how determination, and a good dash of self-confidence, can propel us to greater heights of endeavour, while the day in the life of one of our international members (page 14) and our President's diverse engagements (page 3) reminds me that the Nutrition Society is valued by people across the world.

With the exciting news that our Training Academy is to expand and offer on-demand webinars (page 11) and the launch of a free online meeting on epidemiology in January (page 20), there are plenty of opportunities to engage with your Society over the next few months. ■

Registered Office: 10 Cambridge Court, 210 Shepherds Bush Road, London W6 7NJ

Nutrition Society Gazette © 2020 The Nutrition Society.

Editorial Board:

Dr Carrie Ruxton, *Freelance Dietitian and Trustee for Strategic Communications*;
Cassandra Ellis, *Nutrition Society*.

Founders:

Sir Joseph Barcroft, *Chairman of the Food Investigation Board*;
Dame Harriette Chick, *Head of the Division of Nutrition, Lister Institute*;
Professor J. C. Drummond, *Scientific Advisor to the Ministry of Food*;
Dr John Hammond, *Animal Research Institute, Cambridge*;
Dr L. J. Harris, *Director, Dunn Nutritional Laboratory, Cambridge*;
Sir Frederick Hopkins, *Professor of Biochemistry, Cambridge*;
Professor H. D. Kay, *Director, National Institute for Research in Dairying*;
Sir Charles Martin, *lately Director, Lister Institute*;
Sir Edward Mellanby, *Secretary, Medical Research Council*;
Sir John Boyd Orr, *Director, Rowett Research Institute*;
Professor R. A. Peters, *Professor of Biochemistry, Oxford*.

President's Update

Professor Julie Lovegrove, President



When the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown came into effect in late March, the idea of the restrictions lasting until December, and possibly beyond, seemed inconceivable. We owe huge thanks to the NHS, numerous key workers and many acts of individual kindness that have continued to support us through this pandemic, often at high personal risk.

There have been some positive changes in our behaviour during lockdown. 'Cooking from scratch', home baking, and mealtimes shared with family became new norms for many. The importance of good nutrition has been reinforced and the requirement for a resilient food system recognised. Nutrition related morbidities such as cardiovascular diseases, type 2 diabetes, obesity and malnutrition have been associated with poorer COVID-19 outcomes, highlighting the importance of nutrition as a key priority to public health.

The Society responded rapidly to the demand for evidence-based information on nutrition and COVID-19, with the launch of a number of webinars addressing the impact of nutrition on immunity, and Vitamin D on COVID-19, which were extremely well received. For full details of all the excellent webinars, I strongly recommend visiting the Nutrition Society Training Academy (NSTA) webpage <https://www.nutritionssociety.org/training-academy>.

[nutritionssociety.org/training-academy](https://www.nutritionssociety.org/training-academy). The *British Journal of Nutrition* was also prompt in publishing a series of papers on nutrition and COVID-19, which offer an excellent evidence-based resource.

We have continued to engage with Parliament, hosting another Parliamentary and Scientific Committee Discussion Meeting online on 26 October 2020. Thought-provoking presentations from Society members Professor Andrew Salter, Professor Ailsa Welch and Dr Jorn Trommelen stimulated much debate.

The Society's very first online conference, 'Nutrition Society Live 2020' in July, was organised at extremely short notice, but was a resounding success. The scientific programme on dietary proteins included insightful presentations from internationally renowned speakers, 72 oral and poster presentations, and attracted a live audience of 454 from 36 countries. Many thanks to everyone involved, including the principal organiser of the scientific programme, Dr Frank Thies, the Aberdeen local organising committee, the Training Academy, and Society staff. While I was proud to be part of such a successful event, presenting from my lounge was an unusual experience for my first Summer Conference as President!

Nutrition Futures Live 2020 in September was another success, with 141 attendees and 31 Oral Communications,

our highest attendance ever recorded. Special thanks to the Student Section chaired by Kiu Sum and local organising committee at Coventry University.

The necessity to meet virtually has had some unexpected benefits, as it has allowed greater engagement with our international colleagues, who often are unable to travel to our conferences. We continue to strengthen our international relations. I had the pleasure of opening the Korean Nutrition Society Conference remotely, and was interviewed during the American Society of Nutrition's online Summer Conference. I also had the great pleasure of 'seeing' you on 8-9 December for our online Winter meeting on micronutrients.

As a result of the rapidly changing landscape in the pandemic, the Trustees have held monthly virtual meetings with the CEO to ensure prompt and appropriate responses to these unprecedented circumstances. It has been a pleasure to see my fellow Trustees so frequently, although I do miss face-to-face meetings. I would like to give my sincerest thanks to everyone for their continued support and work effort during such difficult times.

To close, I would like to wish you all a safe and enjoyable Christmas, and hope that the New Year will bring greater freedom of movement and a COVID-19 vaccine. ■

A busy year for the Society's journals

Professor Jayne Woodside, Honorary Publications Officer

The past 12 months have been a busy time for the Nutrition Society journals, and, indeed, the broader publishing landscape. The Publications Committee, Trustees and Cambridge University Press met in November 2019 to discuss and plan for the future of the journals. Subsequently, and for the first time, our journals now have their own strategy, which closely aligns with that of the Society but continues to develop the portfolio and each individual journal. We met again in November 2020 to review progress and I am very pleased to be able to give you a brief update on all of the developments in the past 12 months, and an insight into future changes.

Measuring success

Although there is debate over their utility, we were still incredibly pleased to hear that the impact factors for our journals had increased by 18.5% in 2019. Beyond impact factors, we were also delighted that key metrics had increased across the whole journal portfolio, with increased citations, full text views and downloads. CiteScore has also been introduced for all journals as an alternative metric to the impact factor.

New journal

In October 2019, we opened submissions for our new journal, published jointly with Cambridge University Press, *Gut Microbiome* (GMB), and were excited to publish the first papers earlier this year, including the first animated video abstract. GMB is a fully open access journal and focuses on research dedicated to the role that different diets, pharmaceuticals and nutraceuticals, prebiotics and probiotics have in shaping an individual's microbiome composition. It welcomes submissions on the contributing factors that influence the gut microbiota and, in turn, how the gut microbiome impacts the health, development and disease status of the whole human body.

Developments

The Editors in Chief continue to work hard with CUP to develop the journals and introduce changes that will improve both the author and the reader experience. Format neutral submissions have recently been introduced for the *British Journal of Nutrition* (BJN) so authors do not need to format their article according to journal style when submitting for the first time, and this was certainly very popular with authors when it was announced on Twitter! Graphical abstracts have also been introduced to "tell the story" of a paper, which will encourage citations and increase readership; these are also really useful to share on social media. We were delighted to watch the inaugural BJN Paper of the Year lecture on 7 December, given by Professor Nagata, Gifu University Graduate School of Medicine, Japan, at the recent Society award event online. Members can view this lecture for free on the Society website.

Open research

Finally, I want to mention the Society's commitment to open research. In addition to our two existing fully open access journals, we have recently stated our commitment to an open access transition and registered our four hybrid journals for the Plan S

Website visits in 2019:

→ 3M+ ←

51K cites



1 New Open Access journal launched
 GUT MICROBIOME

transformative journals programme. This means that authors of research funded by cOAlition S will be able to submit to the Society's hybrid journals and publish in a Plan S-compliant manner. The transition to open access is accompanied by a shift from traditional subscriptions to Read and Publish (R&P) agreements with academic institutions, which are negotiated on our behalf through our publishers, Cambridge University Press.

As part of our commitment to open research, the Trustees have recently approved the plan to "flip" *Public Health Nutrition* to open access. Further details will be released early in 2021.

An exciting time for our journals and I am grateful for the continued hard work of the EICs, editorial boards, reviewers, Nutrition Society staff and Cambridge University Press. ■

Great news @NutritionSoc, less time spent formatting, more time for useful work, hopefully others will follow the example

Fantastic news, hopefully some other journals will follow suit 🍌🍌

Good news. I hope other journals will follow suit

This seems like a good idea! Any SLP journals doing this?

This is really good news!

Well done @NutritionSoc!! Great news for all and much appreciated. More time for science 🍌

Great decision by BJN - hopefully more journals will follow suit and allow scientists to spend time on research instead of word processors.



The 2021 Conference Programme

Dr Bernard Corfe, Honorary Programmes Officer
Mark Hollingsworth, CEO

How we are planning for COVID, post-COVID and post-post-COVID

The Nutrition Society's 2020 conference season was beset by the challenges of COVID-19, and of uncertainty at the duration and extent of lockdown coupled to further complexity insofar as we plan our conferences across four different administrations. Early in the trajectory of the epidemic we held several emergency planning meetings: at all times we sought to balance the safety of our members and compliance with national guidance, with the need to interact and to share science as a central pillar of our activity. Our response has been dynamic, and we aimed to make decisions on how each conference was delivered in a manner which allowed delegates enough time to make their own plans. By now, you will all know that in practice we postponed the Irish Summer Conference, cancelled our Aberdeen Summer conference, organised, at short notice, a virtual Summer Conference and moved both our Student Conference (Nutrition Futures) and our Winter Conference to online format.

We have been overwhelmed with the positivity and engagement of members with our virtual conferences so far, the registrations for these meetings exceeded not just our expectations, but also our typical registrations at face-to-face meetings. This evidences the ongoing wish for interaction with peers, the quality of the speakers who agreed to speak, the local organisers' relentless efforts to develop outstanding programme. We would like to acknowledge the massive contribution of the backroom team who made sure that the platforms worked, speakers and chairs were briefed, timing went to plan and all the communications before during and after were clear and timely. It was a huge effort and a team effort. Thank you all.

So, what does 2021 hold? This was written in late October, just as we face a second wave, with the probability of further lockdown growing daily. At our Science Committee in September, we continued short and long term planning for the Society's conference programme.

Our underlying principle is to ensure that the Society provides the highest quality environment for the dissemination of nutritional science and that conferences remain accessible to as many delegates as possible, noting that delegates or speakers may be subject to different regulations to the hosting venue. The Science Committee is determined to deliver, for all delegates and at all conferences, an enriching experience. This includes not only access to the symposia, but also opportunities to present emerging research, network with other delegates, and hold peer-to-peer discussions. We exist first and foremost to bring people together within our discipline -



despite the challenges of COVID-19, the Society remains firmly committed to meeting this objective.

For 2021 some meetings are being planned in an online only format, these will continue to build on our outstanding success with Nutrition Society Live and Nutrition Futures to ensure an engaging and fulfilling experience. Where conferences are planned to occur face-to-face, we will ensure that the meetings remain digitally accessible (hybrid meetings) for speakers and delegates who are unable to travel. Hybrid conferences allow for people to attend a physical conference, whilst also ensuring the 'live streaming' of as many of the plenary sessions, symposia and posters as possible.

Mindful of the dynamic challenges of the pandemic, all conferences have a contingency plan for switching to online-only. We commit to supporting members by publishing in advance the "live vs. online" decision date, registration and abstract submission dates. Please refer to the events directory at the back of the Gazette for a summary of our current 2021 offering with the relevant dates

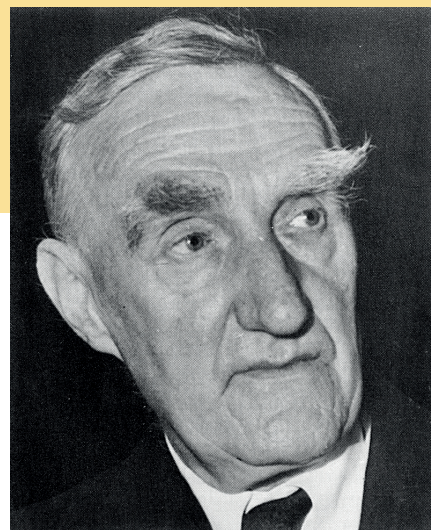
Beyond 2021, one very noticeable aspect of registrations for our online meetings was the increase in number of international delegates registering and joining in the meetings and discussions. Live streaming clearly has the potential to offer access to our conferences for a global audience, and could even become *de facto* for all future Society conferences. Clearly much work needs to be undertaken to ensure the highest possible quality can be achieved to make the most of this unique opportunity, but the new ways in which we have learned to work during this pandemic may, just may, lead to an even more inclusive, democratising and international flavour to our long-term meetings plans. ■

Sir John Boyd Orr

Professor W Philip James

I never met Boyd Orr as he died aged 91 in 1971, just after I returned to the UK after four years working abroad. However, my wife Jean and I had extensive contacts with David Lubbock and his wife Minty, Boyd Orr's daughter, when I became Director of the Rowett in 1982 and moved into the house which Boyd Orr himself had designed. David reminisced constantly about the extraordinary times they had together and I slowly worked out, despite David's innate modesty that, after attaining his biochemistry degree at Cambridge, he had transferred to work at the Rowett essentially as Boyd Orr's unpaid personal assistant for decades, undertaking all Boyd Orr's practical human studies.

A detailed analysis of Boyd Orr's life can be found in the superb Royal Society biography. Brought up in reasonable comfort as the son of a quarry owner in a strict Free Church of Scotland's environment, he was taught classics in his early teenage years and was then employed as a pupil teacher (initial salary £10/year) but after four years he won a scholarship to a Glasgow teacher training college. There he was exposed to the squalor of the Glasgow slums: in the 1890s the destitute often slept 10-15 children and adults in one room; typhus, dysentery, cholera and smallpox were rampant, as were rickets and malnutrition in both children and the elderly. The poor subsisted on white bread, spread with margarine - a new

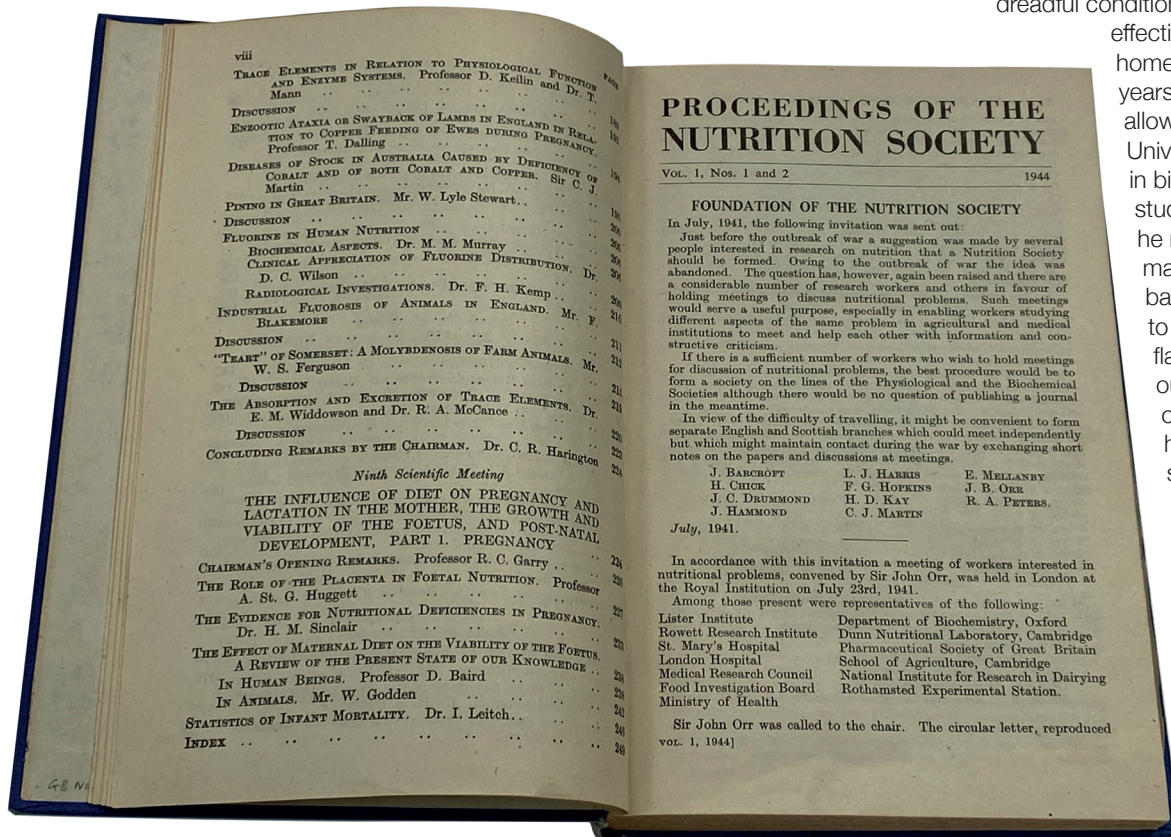


Sir John Boyd Orr

French invention - sprinkled with sugar. This nutrient-poor fare remained a staple food until at least the 1990s.

Boyd Orr's first job in a slum school lasted only a few days as he realised that malnourished children, living in dreadful conditions, could not be taught

effectively so he returned home and taught for four years, saving enough to allow him to go to Glasgow University to do a degree in biological sciences and study medicine. When he ran out of money, he managed to persuade a bank to lend him enough to buy some tenement flats which he rented out and managed, thus covering the cost of his studies. After his science and medical degrees, he finally paid off his debts by acting as a ship's surgeon for a few months. He then started in general practice but was asked to join Edward Cathcart's physical chemistry research at a time when Nobel Prizes were being won for



Sir Boyd Orr was the Society's first President, as shown in the first volume of *Proceedings of the Nutrition Society*



the discovery of vitamins and minerals which prevented specific diseases and promoted animal growth. Cathcart was then asked to move to Aberdeen but opted for a London Professorship instead so proposed Boyd Orr for the Aberdeen post in what Boyd Orr believed to be an Institute studying nutrition. However, on arrival, he found there was no institute – just some money for a timber-framed lab on a Department of Agriculture farm. With the seed money Boyd Orr set about building a granite - not wooden - building and asked for 10 times as much money as had been allocated. This request was refused but the walls and roof were being built when, in 1914, Boyd Orr volunteered for service as a medical officer in an infantry unit. They suffered huge casualties on the Somme but Boyd Orr changed the infantry's diet by adding vegetables so fewer needed hospitalisation; they also avoided trench foot because he insisted the men wore boots one size too big. He received a Military Cross at the Somme and a

DSO at Passchendaele for bravery. He was still officially a civilian and then asked to transfer to the navy before being recalled to help plan better diets for the army, based on his personal experience of war time feeding.

After the Armistice he returned to Aberdeen and persuaded John Quiller Rowett to release some of his profits made during the war to cover half the funds needed to expand and establish the Rowett Institute. The Treasury agreed he could work on human as well as animal nutrition and he also persuaded the Carnegie Trust and local philanthropists to contribute further substantial funds. His research emphasised the need for adequate minerals for animal growth, but he also undertook experiments on children's growth using some of the excess milk which at that time was being disposed of, e.g. down old mines. The marked improvements in growth and well-being, particularly of children from poor families, led to greater milk use

but also to further nutritional surveys and the publication of his (and David Lubbock's) book "Food Health and Income" (pictured) which documented the national crisis of widespread UK malnutrition linked to poverty. When I discovered their surveys in the Rowett's basement, these were then used for long term cancer studies.

Boyd Orr persuaded Harold MacMillan (future Prime Minister, publisher and member of the Establishment) to publish their analyses when government sources threatened to ban them. Boyd Orr and David then disappeared into the Highlands to avoid the resulting uproar. Later, after a 1938 visit to Germany at the request of the Cabinet Secretary to investigate the nutritional well-being of the Germans, they published "Feeding the people in war time". Then the issue was how to activate their proposals. David, from a well-connected, wealthy and politically active aristocratic family, discovered that the Ministry's preliminary wartime

Sir John Boyd Orr

Professor W Philip James

planning of food rationing was defective. So he telegraphed Boyd Orr to bring their survey data on the overnight train from Aberdeen to London to prove to the Ministry that they were wrong. He also manipulated to allow Boyd Orr access to Lord Woolton, advisor to Churchill, to change the basis of the planned food rationing in the Second World War. So successful was this rationing that Boyd Orr was one of the four leaders - along with the Ministries of Food and Health - to be awarded the American Lasker Award post war.

In 1941 Boyd Orr was one of the co-founders of the Nutrition Society and its first President from 1942 to 1945. In 1942 he was asked to travel to the USA to consider a League of Nations plan to improve global food supplies. He presented his ideas to the Vice President but when the President later invited delegates from countries to a Hot Springs meeting on "Freedom from Want", the British refused to nominate Boyd Orr.

However, Lester Pearson, the future Canadian Prime Minister, drafted the outcome of the conference and in 1945 arranged a conference in Quebec where Boyd Orr was asked to attend as an unofficial British observer. Pearson, unexpectedly, asked Boyd Orr to address the tedious, endlessly diplomatic meeting, thereby giving him the opportunity to let rip about the need for a World Food Bank. Boyd Orr then left in disgust to walk in the hills. However, on his return he was astonished to discover they were searching for him to ask him to be the first Director General of what became the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. He accepted and moved to Washington to set up an office with a small staff including David Lubbock (recently released from a German prisoner of war camp). They rapidly established that there was a food crisis in Europe and the Middle East, as well as elsewhere, and proposed a World Food Board with sweeping international powers. Unsurprisingly

these proved unacceptable to the main post-war powers. Nevertheless, Boyd Orr established regional centres for action and arranged for FAO to be established in Rome before resigning and continuing to promote the need for drastic action to feed the global poor.

In 1947 he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and subsequently many other prizes and honorary degrees. He travelled extensively, meeting Presidents and Prime Ministers, many of whom asked for help while he continued to advocate a revolution in food production for the improvement for human health. He became an MP, entered the House of Lords and was further honoured by the Queen. Boyd Orr persisted until his death to advocate for a new approach to alleviating poverty and improving national nutrition. We could do with him now! ■

Images: reproduced from The Nutrition Society Archive



New Honorary Fellows Announced

The Nutrition Society periodically recognises individuals who have made significant and outstanding contributions globally to the advancement of the study of the science of nutrition. In such cases the highest honour the Society can bestow upon an individual is an Honorary Fellowship, which carries with it a life membership with the Society.

I am very pleased to be able announce the names of four new Nutrition Society Honorary Fellows. They are Professor Barbara Livingstone, Professor Geraldine McNeill, Professor Paul Trayhurn and Professor John Mathers.

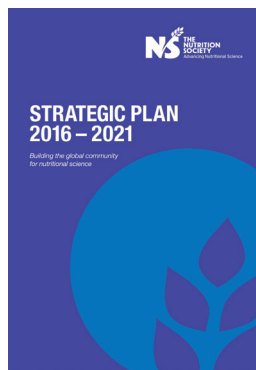
Congratulations to our new Honorary Fellows of 2020. We look forward to formally welcoming the new Fellows at an appropriate Society event in 2021.

Professor Julie Lovegrove

Execution is the critical part of a successful strategy

Mark Hollingsworth, Chief Executive Officer

On 3 November 2020 the Society's trustees held a strategic planning day, in which I was privileged to play a coordinating role. To launch the day I presented to the trustees the five strategic priorities agreed in the 2016-2021 strategic plan. I then shared data showing all of the completed projects emerging from those priorities over the past four years (2016 to the end of 2019). The list was rather impressive. Although a full report on the strategic outcomes of the 2016-2021 strategic plan will be published when the plan is signed off by the trustees at its completion in April 2021, I was asked by the trustees to share this interim data of completed projects with the members in the Gazette.



Here is a summary of the data:

- Launched the project to create a Society Archive
- Delivered a new five year journal publishing contract with Cambridge University Press
- Launched a new *Gut Microbiome Journal*
- Invested £375,000 in supporting conferences
- Created One-Day member-led meetings
- Published two new editions of textbooks, began one new joint textbook (*Animal Nutrition*)
- Created the Nutrition Society Training Academy
- Launched three new senior awards
- Hosted the first Society All Party Parliamentary Group in the House of Commons
- Helped to form the Academy of Nutrition Sciences
- Created Nutrition Futures Conference
- Created the Summer Studentship Programme (awarding £57,000 in grants)
- Funded a Daphne Jackson Fellowship (£60,000)
- £45,000 invested in a new membership database
- New Honorary Officer position for membership created
- Formed a new Membership Committee
- Invited to hold a seat on the BAPEN Council
- Created Honorary Fellow status
- Celebrated the Society's 75th Anniversary
- Renovated the Society's offices
- Created the International Student Competition
- Hosted FENS 2019 conference
- Hosting the FENS and IUNS secretariats
- Launched a new website
- Formed a Strategic Communications Committee
- Developed a new arms-length voting model

This list left me considering how, in just four years, the Society had managed to achieve so much. I would wish to suggest that this list of successful projects emanates primarily from strong strategic leadership, starting with the trustee board. A good strategy is long on detail, it is the result of careful analysis, insightful comment, and has actionable priorities and objectives. This results from a rigorous planning process and sometimes a tough-minded review. I believe the decision made by the trustees at the commencement of the plan to review its progress at every trustee meeting, making it the centrepiece of every agenda, became the driving force behind the success.

Execution is the critical part of a successful strategy. By execution I mean getting the tasks complete, making them happen, and this is perhaps the most unappreciated skill of an effective trustee board. The trustees, over the past four years have never lost sight of their strategic vision. It gave them a strong sense of direction and mission, and enabled them to build on the history and traditions of the Society whilst developing a strong contemporary edge to enable the Society to survive in the 21st-century

My experience over many years spent both in the military and in non-profit organisations is that there are fundamentals that characterise successful organisations, and indeed successful leaders:

- They are focused.
- They are superb at execution.
- They abound with personal leadership.

I suggest the Society has been extremely fortunate over the past years to have developed that sense of leadership, and that this extensive list of successfully completed projects is evidence of that. As the 2021-2025 strategy begins to take shape, with input from members, Council, committees, trustees, and staff, I firmly believe the Society will create another believable and executable strategic plan. ■





Professor Hilary Powers

What first attracted you to nutritional science?

After graduating in Biological Sciences I worked as a volunteer with Voluntary Service Overseas. I spent two years working as a science teacher in the Northern part of Malawi, East Africa. This was my first experience of living in an environment in which food supply could be precarious, and I could not help but be struck by the impact that this could have on a population's health and people's livelihoods. On my return to the UK I took up a post as a research assistant in the department of Human Nutrition at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, headed at that time by Professor John Waterlow.

How did your early career develop?

My time at LSHTM was fundamental to the development of my interest in human nutrition and my career. I was very fortunate to be offered a bursary from the Medical Research Council, for PhD study, and hence began my interest in riboflavin, and eventually, other B vitamins. The next significant stage in my early career was at the Dunn Nutrition Unit in Cambridge, where I was able to continue research into the functional impact of riboflavin deficiency. Much of this research was conducted in Keneba, The Gambia, where the Dunn Nutrition Unit has a field station. I spent many months there, over several years, and have lasting memories of a wonderful place and marvellous people.

Has there been a project that you have worked on that was a defining point in your career, or nutritional science?

Hmm that is a difficult question. I can identify the point at which my research started to move away from the functional impact of riboflavin deficiency and turn towards understanding the role of B vitamins in the methyl cycle. I attended a lecture in Sheffield by a pathologist, who was talking about an inborn error of metabolism that led to homocystinuria.

I was fascinated to realise that several B vitamins played an important role in the methyl cycle, and this was the stimulus to about 15 years of research into homocysteine metabolism, methyl donors and disease. In fact this line of research led to studies of human papillomavirus-related cancers, a timely reminder that dietary factors may influence virus behaviour.

What has been the most rewarding, or challenging, part of your work?

I cannot make a distinction between teaching and research in this regard. I started teaching after graduating with my PhD, focussing on nutritional biochemistry, which I love. I taught nutritional biochemistry at postgraduate level at the University of Sheffield for over 25 years. I really do have a passion for teaching this subject. The challenge for me has always been to convince students with an inherent distrust or fear of biochemistry that the subject is logical and beautiful and of immense relevance to understanding how we humans adapt metabolically to such an extremely wide range of dietary habits. However I have also loved the time I have spent in laboratory based research, especially the technical and intellectual challenge of designing experiments to address particularly difficult questions.

In your opinion, how has the field of nutritional science and the key issues changed?

Undoubtedly the greatest change has been the shift in emphasis from a consideration of nutritional deficiencies to optimum nutrition. Also, in the early days of my career, the notion of customised or individualised nutrition really did not exist, mainly because the impact of subtle genetic or epigenetic differences between individuals on nutrient handling and nutritional requirements was not at all appreciated or understood.

In your opinion, how has the public perception of nutrition changed?

I should say that forty years ago nutrition was not a topic of great media attention and partly in consequence, not a topic of intense public interest. Dietary messages and nutrition claims have changed over the past four or five decades as scientific understanding has evolved, but also reflecting the change in the perception of the role of women as food providers. As the focus of nutrition research shifted, the media has become much more engaged in reporting and discussing possible causal links between diet and health and disease. Of course there continues to be huge public interest in the role of diet in determining body fatness, or leanness, but the general public is probably more aware of the broader impact of diet on health.

What are your hopes for the continuing development of nutritional science?

I would say that the greatest challenge facing nutritionists these days is how to address the global challenge of obesity, and in many countries, the double burden of undernutrition and obesity. My hope is that nutritional scientists can look up from their own specialist research from time to time and really consider whether, as a profession, they are challenging the many obstacles that some sections of society, and some populations face in simply trying to eat well.

How has being a member of the Society impacted on your career?

In the early years of my career in nutritional science in particular, the Society was an invaluable source of information for me. I had never formally studied nutrition and so the Society's conferences were of tremendous interest and value. They also provided the opportunity to meet colleagues, make new contacts and to nurture research collaboration. The Society was the bedrock of my development as a nutritional scientist, and I value greatly the impact it has had on my career. ■

Nutrition Society Training Academy (NSTA)

Penny Hunking, Honorary Training Academy Officer



The Nutrition Society Training Academy (NSTA) launched its first webinar in November 2018, with the mission of enhancing and investing in the improvement of Nutrition Science. Initially, webinars focused on 'hot topics' and this strategy for delivery has meant that Society members have been easily able to access ground-breaking, research evidenced based science. Just this year, and within weeks of national lockdown in the UK, the NSTA featured two webinars dealing with issues pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic. Now the portfolio has been developed and extended to skill acquisition webinars and those deemed 'core' to any nutrition professionals' knowledge, such as the *Introduction to Human Nutrition* (IHN) webinar series. The IHN series acts as a superb source of reference for the underpinning science of nutrition. In addition, online workshops have covered topics including statistical analysis and systematic reviews.

The NSTA has always focused on delivering live webinars, with the advantage that the audience are able to directly engage with the speaker through the specified question time offered at the end. However, in order to accommodate busy schedules that do not allow engagement with a live lunchtime webinar, all NSTA webinars are now available to attend on-demand. Previously, recorded webinars were only available at specified times and dates, but after taking member comments on board, we are delighted to announce that all webinars are now readily available to view at your leisure. The

NSTA remains committed to be a leader in terms of delivering our offerings in line with the ongoing needs, requirements and requests of the membership

Despite the obvious difficulties and challenges posed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NSTA aims to take a proactive approach to address the needs of the membership, the NSTA and the Society. By taking this approach the membership has been able to access this superb CPD resource, despite the unknown barriers that were quickly placed upon us all. Thankfully, given the fact that the Society had already made the decision to offer training online it meant that when conferences had to be cancelled, the Society did not have to implement a reactive approach. In reality, the pandemic presented an example of where the Society's versatile and proactive approach ensured that the membership would not have to go without CPD training in the months of restricted movement. In addition, as time went on the NSTA team saw the opportunity and benefits that could be offered to the membership by working collegiately with the conference department. This led to the successful delivery of Nutrition Society Live 2020 and has identified clear potential for future synergies and potential growth of the NSTA and the conference portfolio post-COVID-19.

With this in mind the NSTA strives to remain ahead of the curve with its offerings and delivery in 2021 and beyond. The NSTA committee has

many aspirations, all stemming from feedback from you, the membership. I am therefore delighted to inform you that the NSTA committee's proposal for expansion has been unanimously approved by the Trustee Board, making these aspirations possible. With the added resources, the NSTA now seeks to continue to deliver CPD opportunities to the membership. Starting as we mean to go we are already planning modest changes, such as categorising the website and cataloguing topics under themes to allow for easy identification of content, as well as producing even more frequent offerings. In addition, there are plans to offer e-learning courses as well as a leadership platform which will assist future leaders of the nutrition profession.

The provision of webinars and online conferencing has propelled engagement opportunities for the international member, and it is extremely important that we build on this encouraging start. For those of you internationally placed we are able now to offer greater opportunities for you to participate, particularly as the NSTA and conferences will deliver under the new programmes sector. This will see conferences accessible from all over the world in a hybrid format. 2021 is set to be an extremely exciting year for the Society across all sectors and the NSTA looks forward to being at the forefront! ■

Membership Matters

Dr Dean A. Sewell, Honorary Membership Officer



I shall try my very best not to use the words 'unprecedented' and 'new normal' in this article, and extol the virtues of a new membership benefit that was launched during lockdown and had been planned from the end of last year. It should bring forth some sweetness. We hope that Member-Connect is a platform which will support our careers and interests in nutrition science in a way that our physical conferences used to contribute to. Networking - our process of interacting with other Society members to exchange information and develop professional and social contacts - has changed, at least for the time being. Networking serves different purposes depending on where we are in the life and work cycle. After graduating we are looking for job opportunities, whilst doing research we are looking to share ideas and difficulties in our experimentation, and to collaborate, and while at work we are looking to find like-minded associates and keep up to date with nutrition science. In the twilight

of our career we might want to maintain friendships, remain informed about nutrition matters, and occasionally, look back.

Your Society, and its Trustees, however, must not look back but think of the future, and the way things will need to be done in the future. Thinking about how we communicate, collaborate and share. Our scientific meetings have been successfully transformed into virtual events, and for now, will need to continue that way. One strength to come out of this has been the concept of a hybrid meeting, which will be the next step. We, as members will have the choice between attending a meeting in person, or attending via an internet platform. But we miss out on meeting people in person, and I have certainly missed that over the last nine months. Member-Connect does what it says on the tin – it gives us another way of connecting, and this can be nationally and internationally. It is an exclusive forum for Nutrition

Society members, with the potential to bring us together. We think that the platform, which is accessible on both mobile and desktop devices, is easy for us all to use.

Prior to lockdown the Membership Committee had been thinking through the virtue of less formal meetings of members, connecting by locality rather than by the topic of a conference. Will Member-Connect and virtual or hybrid meetings satisfy our appetite for connecting, or would occasional regional physical meetings be a welcome addition to our learned society? Member-Connect has a Discussion board Board (pictured) and in these early days of our new engagement platform there are discussions set up for the Training Academy, Publications, Membership, Conferences, all three of the scientific themes, and the Student section. It would be great to see Discussions started in areas such as Industry, and Animal Nutrition. In fact, on anything nutrition science related – why not give it a go? Member-Connect also contains a Resource Library, at the moment containing a career case-study, CV ideas, and common interview mistakes.

We hope that whatever stage you are in your career, that you will embrace this new technology membership benefit. After all, more than ever we may be unable to return to what we had before, and we must look forward. ■

The Training Academy (NSTA) 1 thread, last active more than a month ago

NS Live - why is there a delegate fee?
Discussion created by Mark Hollingsworth

Publications 1 thread, last active more than a month ago

Nutrition links and angles
Discussion created by Anna Gryka-MacPhail

Membership 5 threads, last active 4 days

Student University Ambassadors - Share and Connect
Discussion created by Alison Barham

Conferences 4 threads, last active 12 days

Volunteering opportunitites
Discussion created by Ranveer Sall

Whole Body Metabolism Theme 5 threads, last active more than a month ago

Ultra-processed foods vs unprocessed/processed foods - an unhelpful dichotomy?
Discussion created by Wendy Hall

PNDS & Nutrition and Dietetic Profession in Pakistan

Contributors:

Fayza Khan
President, PNDS

Ltcd.rabia Anwer Ti (M)
Vice President PNDS

Mozamila Saeed Mughal
General Sect. PNDS

Pakistan Nutrition and Dietetic Society (PNDS) started its journey with a small group of likeminded qualified dietitians/nutritionists and academic professionals. Founded and registered in 2003 in Karachi as a professional society with the aim to represent, promote, and strengthen the profession of nutrition to achieve better nutrition status for the Pakistani population through an organized and professional body. PNDS has provided a platform for collective action by these educated, skilled, and trained professionals who can assume consultative and leadership roles in academia, health-related institutions, and corporate sectors.

Within a short span of 17 years, PNDS has established four local chapters throughout the country, having more than 900 members and 250 Registered Dietitians/Nutritionists. Within the first decade PNDS initiated publication of PNDS newsletter & scored registration/membership with International bodies such as, Asian Federation of Dietetic Association AFDA, International Confederation of Dietetic Association (ICDA), and International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS). Registration/Certification Exam was held in 2010 for Nutritionist and Dietitians, and scoring for continuing nutrition education sessions was started for the renewal of registration/certification. All of this was made possible due to high level of commitment and consistent efforts of its members working voluntarily for the society. Presently, PNDS represents Nutritionists at various national and international forums. In the recent years MOU has been signed with The Nutrition Society & American Society of Nutrition (ASN) for academic excellence and capacity building of its members. Additionally, PNDS is also part of Pakistan Scaling Up Nutrition Movement (SUN & SUNAR) and some of its senior members have assisted SUN in different initiatives like the development of "Pakistani Dietary Guideline". The aim was to improve food

habits through behavior change. One of the remarkable achievements of PNDS is the arranging of first highly successful PNDS International Conference on Non-Communicable Diseases at Lahore in collaboration with The Nutrition Society.

PNDS has adopted a two-pronged approach by being involved in several professional development activities for its members but has also been engaged in various social awareness programmes regarding importance of nutrition. For example, PNDS team members have worked in a disaster hit areas such as famines, floods or earthquakes to provide nutrition support, especially to women and children. Recently, a campaign with media professionals was launched to promote good nutrition and health among public.

For many years, the scope of dietitians and nutritionists remained limited to hospitals, clinics, and academia but with changing times this dynamic profession has continued to grow with nutrition professionals finding opportunities to work in different fields like gyms, corporate sector, public health organisations, schools, and restaurants. Despite a high prevalence of nutritional awareness challenges in Pakistan, the nutrition and dietetics profession and practice has changed slowly but steadily. Due to non-regulation of the profession, dietitians are paid less than the other allied health professionals. Their salaries vary drastically based on experience, skills, gender, or location. Senior-level nutrition positions in the private and government sector are mostly occupied by medical and other allied health professionals. According to a rough estimate, there are approximately 30-35 colleges and universities offering BSc or Master's degree in Human Nutrition, Dietetics or Food Sciences. Efforts should be directed towards the standardisation and uniformity of the curriculums of these universities



Fayza Khan

along with the supervised internship and training programs. The nutrition issues of the Pakistani population have been highlighted at various forum many times in the past with no focus on finding practical and sustainable solutions. In fact, regulation of nutrition education and degrees is one aspect of the solution to the problem. In addition, analysis of job and career structure along with legal aspects of the profession and other related issues are the other aspects of the solution.

Despite of several challenges & very limited resources, PNDS is striving hard for its survival to promote and recognise profession of nutrition and dietetics in Pakistan and hopes to increase awareness and to get support from public, health professionals as well as from government policy makers for optimal utilization of Nutrition and Dietetic professionals for the welfare of country. ■

A day in the life of...

Charlotte Debeugny

I am a Registered Nutritionist working part time in a medical centre in Paris, providing general nutrition and dietary guidance to private patients as well as working closely with dietitians and doctors to support patients with chronic diseases. Over the last two years, France has rolled out an online booking system called 'Doctolib' for medical and paramedical professionals which is now used throughout the country. It has made booking appointments so much easier! Patients can now book directly online and documents can be uploaded and shared. It also has a video consultation option which allowed me to keep working during the recent lockdowns!

I am bilingual and work both in French and English, although towards the end of a long day, I find myself sometimes slipping into 'franglais', which I am pleased to say, makes my French and English speaking patients roar with laughter!

Working as a nutritionist in France, means that I also have to keep myself up to date with French nutrition and dietary regulations. Like the UK, while the title of Dietician is a legally protected one, anyone can call themselves a nutritionist, and I believe it is incredibly important that we underline the importance of qualifications and professional experience in the nutrition science domain. I have written several books on nutrition and health which were published by Marabout, part of the Hachette publishing group. I enjoy writing both in French and English (although my French written grammar is far from perfect!)

While the underlying nutrition guidelines can be applied internationally, there are cultural differences which means you

have to subtly adapt your communication for your audience. For example, one of the many things I like about the French culture is the importance and value placed on mealtimes, eating together and enjoying food. There is less of an issue with snacking and fizzy drinks, so for a French speaking patient, our discussion might focus more on the quantities and composition of the meals.

I truly enjoy what I do. I am passionate about the role diet and nutrition can play in supporting health and really enjoy helping to guide people towards a balanced diet. I am very aware that most people do know what they should be doing, it's just that it can sometimes seem too difficult or complicated. My aim is to 'wave a magic wand' (!) and give practical and realistic guidance which suits their requirements and lifestyle. So, for weight control, for example, I might suggest replacing 50% of their carbohydrate serving with a vegetable, while underlining that this vegetable can be in any form – raw/ cooked/frozen or tinned!

One of the most important soft skills I use as nutritionist is the ability to listen. It's this skill that then helps me to adapt the guidance, so it is personalised for the patient. I'm a big fan of the motivational interviewing technique, which I feel works well for behaviour change and promoting healthy habits. The aim is to channel the patient's intrinsic motivation, so the goal is not for me to tell them what to do (!) but for the patient to tell me at the end of the appointment, what changes they feel they can commit to making.

What adds an interesting twist, is that in a former life, I worked in finance and consulting and I remain a chartered accountant. I work two days a week as a



financial controller, providing accounting and budgetary guidance to a financial technology company specialising in artificial intelligence. You may well be wondering whether accounting skills can be transferable to a nutrition career – I'd certainly say yes! My previous career required me to be focused and methodical as well as have good people management and communication skills – these skills are completely transferable! I am a member of one of the FENS (Federation of European Nutrition Societies) working groups which is tasked with reviewing how to improve standards in the science of nutrition. My group is focused on the review and optimisation of the external communication of nutrition science to promote public trust. It is a really interesting project which I am very proud to be part of.

I feel very lucky to have had the opportunity to change careers and do a job that I love. We, as nutritionists, have an important role to play terms of advancing nutrition science and supporting public health. ■

Have healthy, sustainable diets become more relevant in the wake of COVID-19?

Hannah Skeggs, IGD



Before the pandemic, two thirds (66%) of consumers were open to changing their diets to be healthier and more sustainable. But since the national lockdown in March, many aspects of consumer behaviour have transformed.

To gain insight into evolving habits around health and sustainability, research and training organisation, IGD surveyed over 1,000 nationally representative UK consumers in July 2020, replicating a survey conducted in November 2019. Hannah Skeggs, Nutrition and Scientific Affairs Manager at IGD explores whether the desire to change diets for health or environmental reasons has evolved in the wake of COVID-19.

There is still significant appetite for change, but it has declined

During this time of disruption, consumers' desire to change their diet to be healthier and more sustainable has reduced. Consumers are struggling with the amount of change in the wake of COVID-19 and human nature tells us to seek control and keep things as they are.

Although there has been a decline in this 'appetite for change', 57% of people surveyed in July are making changes or thinking about making changes to their diets. This continues to present a huge opportunity for the food and consumer goods industry to support better choices



and a positive transition. And we see this positive intent translating into action as some people cook more from scratch, are sourcing local produce and actively reducing their food waste.

Evidence suggests that to shift towards healthier and more sustainable diets, consumers should be increasing the proportion of foods coming from plant-based sources, reduce meat and dairy and reduce foods high in fat, salt and sugar. Our research indicates that COVID-19 has impacted all these areas but most notably it has driven polarising behaviour around meat-eating. The proportion of people eating meat in the UK has fallen significantly in the last nine months, with a rise in vegetarian and vegan diets from 9% of consumers in November 2019 to 15% in July 2020.

However, in contrast there has been an increase in how frequently those who eat meat are consuming it – with significantly more people eating meat a few times a week or every day. The increase in meat eating frequency is driven primarily by men, and higher socio-economic groups.

People rate their diets as less healthy and sustainable than before COVID-19

While most people continue to overestimate how 'good their diets are', we see a significant downturn in how healthy and sustainable they assess their diets to be. This suggests many people acknowledge that their eating habits have got worse during lockdown. This is reinforced by self-reported data from the COVID Symptom Study app, which suggests many are snacking more, and an average weight gain of 3kg during lockdown.

Health remains the primary driver for change

Personal health remains the biggest motivator for change, with nearly two-thirds (63%) of people citing health as

their primary driver up from 58% in 2019. Significantly fewer people are motivated to change their diets for environmental reasons than in 2019. However, environmental sustainability remains a supporting reason for change, especially for those aged 18-24.

It's unsurprising that COVID-19 has amplified the value we place on our own wellness, as the government, media and our behaviour has been focused on preventing ill health. The pandemic has demonstrated our diets are inextricably linked with our health. Before the pandemic, poor diet was responsible for one in seven deaths in the UK. Now, people living with obesity are more than 50% more likely to die from COVID-19.

Industry has a critical role

The data show healthier and more sustainable diets are still a priority for over half of consumers, but they would welcome support from industry to get there. Perceived cost is still the primary barrier for adopting these diets, and with backdrop of a recession and EU exit, the nation's health inequalities are likely to increase. The pandemic has highlighted our reliance on an efficient and sustainable food system, and many businesses have already taken great steps to promote healthy diets.

It is critical that the food and consumer goods industry continues to play its part in offering healthier, more sustainable and affordable diets. IGD has established a new project group including manufacturers, retailers, food service and nutrition experts to identify and test the most effective behaviour change initiatives to support change and will share this best practice as it emerges. ■

Further details and methodology can be found on the IGD website.

Student Section update

Kiu Sum, Chair of Student Section

It has been an exciting past few months since my last report, despite the weird time we are now accustomed to. I would like to first and foremost thank Alexandra Williams, Olga Wojciechowska and Tony McKenna who served on the Student Section last academic year. While it was sad to see them go, we wish Alexandra, Olga and Tony all the very best in the studies and/or in their new careers.

It was last year where the Student Section had a re-structure, and designated roles were assigned to better coordinate our student activities and build and maintain new connections with our student community. Still, somewhat in its infancy, it has nevertheless been fantastic to see how the Section has evolved over the past year. Over the summer and with a consultation with the Section, we have moved forward with this new academic year to further support the exciting online activities we have in the pipeline. One of the main aims of 2020 was to better connect with students across the UK and internationally. Following the success of our recent Nutrition Futures Live, and moving forward, I am pleased to see that the Student Section is now working closely with the Irish and Scottish Section via their Student Representatives to share experiences and practices.

As mentioned, we recently held our annual student-led conference, Nutrition Futures. Here, Rachel Moon (Student Section's Nutrition Futures Representative) summarises our conference:



“Nutrition Futures is one of the Nutrition Society’s annual conferences built for students with a range of careers and science lectures and workshops. It allows students to step into the world of research, giving them a chance to present their own, in a friendly and welcoming environment, which is a fantastic opportunity to gain skills that are applicable throughout life. Due to COVID-19, this year’s conference was held online as ‘Nutrition Futures Live’. Our diverse programme allowed delegates to learn about a range of topics, including sports nutrition, public speaking, early careers research and public health nutrition. The popular careers panel also took place, where our enthusiastic panellists from different industries answered delegates questions. A fantastic networking opportunity organised by the Kiu Sum, our Student Section Chair, took place on the first evening where delegates got a chance to get to know each other and take part in

a quiz. This was a great chance to gain connections and delegates thoroughly enjoyed it. Over the two days and despite the circumstances of running the conference online, delegates were very engaged throughout and asked plenty of questions to keep the speakers thinking. Overall, this year’s conference was a success and I would like to thank again the Society for making it possible and for all the support that was given throughout. For 2021, Imperial College London will be hosting the conference and planning is underway. So be sure to hear more about it in the coming months”.

In addition to Rachel’s summary, we would like to thank the Nutrition Society’s staff, the Scientific Committee, our student chairs from Coventry University and all the speakers for their support and contributions in making our conference a success and reaching our international members. ■

If any student members would like to find out more about our upcoming activities, please do visit the website and or contact us directly at studentsection@nutritionssociety.org We would be very happy to hear any feedback or ideas to continuously develop our offerings.

Daphne Jackson Fellowship sponsored by the Nutrition Society

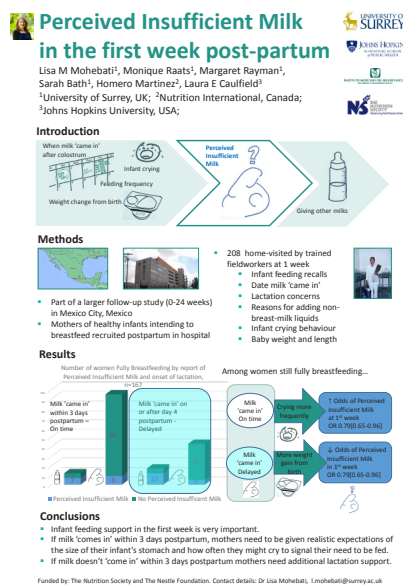
Dr Lisa Mohebat

When I began my Fellowship two years ago I was excited to be embarking on a new learning journey and to once again be back to formal research in Nutrition.

Previously, my choice to take a break was a conscious one. I had relocated internationally and was in new, unfamiliar surroundings. I had also spent many years studying infant feeding and was ready to test my knowledge in practice by feeding infants of my own. The years that followed were an invaluable experience which I will always treasure. As my small cohort of study participants got older, I felt compelled to put many years of study and practical experience to benefit others in addition to my own limited circle of family and friends.

Returning after an extended break was not easy. Advances in knowledge, training, statistical methods, software and funding opportunities changed over the years and were not easily accessible to those formally unaffiliated to Universities. The number of capable and skilled nutrition researchers had also increased, providing healthy competition for jobs available in the field.

Finding the Daphne Jackson Fellowship online made me hopeful. Professor Daphne Jackson was the UK's first female Professor of Physics and an avid campaigner for women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) careers. The Trust offered support in the form of an externally-funded part-time Fellowship which focused on retraining. The Daphne Jackson Trust presented my research proposal to the Nutrition Society, who generously made it possible for me to return to research. In addition to being one of the largest Nutrition societies in the world, it is also one in which a long line of distinguished female scientists has actively



Dr Lisa Mohebat

participated, including Dr Dame Harriette Chick and Dr Elsie Widdowson. I was hosted by the University of Surrey with its vibrant Nutrition department and the thriving Food, Consumer Behaviour and Health Research Centre.

While I felt a bit rusty when I first started, I was soon feeling more comfortable. I had supportive, knowledgeable mentors and made new friends. I was once again part of an active research environment and was awarded additional money at to build a research community around Early Years Research. My professional network expanded and I polished my skills and confidence in various training workshops. I enjoyed following new developments at various conferences and contributed to their programmes with both an oral and poster presentation, the latter of which received a certificate of honourable mention from Professor Dame Athene Donald. I felt a sense of accomplishment when I submitted my manuscript and am still applying myself to writing additional papers and grants as my Fellowship is winding to an end.

There were also other unexpected challenges alongside COVID-19. These were mainly related to recovering a rich data set from old VHS-C tapes and fulfilling the requirements of contemporary international ethics and data governance processes. Fortunately, the skilled assistance of a capable technician and persistent efforts led to a happy, albeit delayed, conclusion.

This has been an amazing journey. I have learned the importance of being flexible and of seizing opportunities which arise. I have learned the value of training, mentorship, encouragement and support. I have learned how fulfilling it is to be given the opportunity to use one's skills and knowledge for a meaningful purpose. Being the first Nutrition Society-funded Daphne Jackson Fellow was an unexpected honour and I will always be grateful to my supervisors, the University of Surrey, the Daphne Jackson Trust and the Nutrition Society for giving me the opportunity to find my way back to science. ■

Update from the Irish Section

Dr. Anne Nugent, Secretary,
Irish Section

Looking back on 2020, Covid-19 has certainly changed the calendar of usual meetings held by the Irish Section of the Society. We were extremely fortunate to be able to hold a face to face Postgraduate Conference in Dublin in February 2020. Hosted by University College Dublin, as usual, the standard of the presentations was excellent and it was a pleasure to see so many questions for the speakers from fellow postgraduate students.

Unfortunately, the 2020 Irish Section Conference, due to be hosted at the University of Limerick by Dr. Eibhlis O'Connor, had to be postponed. But every difficulty provides another opportunity and in 2021, the University of Limerick will now host a merged postgraduate and Irish Section meeting which will be fully online and open to all. The team in Limerick are finalising an exciting new format from 22-24 June 2021 which will feature a single day of postgraduate activities on the 22 June followed by a two day Irish Section Conference. The postgraduate section will change to an interactive communications workshop followed by a 'thesis in three' format where students will explain their thesis in three minutes. The Irish Section conference theme remains 'Nutrition, Health and Ageing' with a programme of exciting and engaging speakers confirmed. It is hoped to open registration in early 2021 with abstract submissions also in early 2021.

We are thankful to safefood for their continued support with the Nutrition Exchange Programme bursaries. In light of travel restrictions and conference cancellations, through the safefood bursaries, the Irish section were still able to support members for attendance at numerous webinars, online conferences and training workshops.

A major concern for members of the Irish Section remains the lack of regulation surrounding the use of the term nutritionist in Ireland. We remain in talks with relevant stakeholders to drive the initial step of having nutritionist listed as a registered title with the relevant regulatory body. We are very much aware of the concerns of our members and are exploring avenues to address these concerns.

Lastly, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all the members of the Irish Section Committee, past and current, for their hard work over the past year. As a Committee, we would also like to send good wishes to all Irish Section members during these difficult times and look forward to a time when it is possible meet up in person again. ■

Update from the Scottish Section

Dr Derek Ball, Secretary,
Scottish Section

In parallel with all members of the Society, the Scottish section has been challenged by the continued effects of the pandemic. Consequently, the Section has had to deal with the postponement of a short meeting that was to be held in September and mitigate the potential effects on the planned Spring Conference in 2021. The Committee is now working hard to ensure that the Spring Conference planned for 30-31 March 2021 will go ahead as a hybrid conference that will offer delegates the opportunity to attend either on a face-to-face basis or through as an online virtual participant. The topic of the meeting is "*The Gut Microbiome*" and will focus on matters related to the gastrointestinal tract and explore the application of animal models to understanding human gut health and the interaction with nutrition. The Scottish Section acknowledges the expert input from Dr Spiridoula Athanasiadou (SRUC) for her hard work in pulling together the programme. As we start planning for the 2022 Spring Meeting, several different topic areas have been identified by the Scottish Section committee that will be presented to the Science Committee in early 2021.

Membership of the Scottish Section committee continues to be a fluid environment. In the last twelve months three members of the committee have left, and on behalf of the section and Society I extend my thanks to Dr Janice Drew (Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen), Dr Viren Ranawana (formerly Rowett Institute now University of Sheffield) and Dr Olly Witard (formerly Stirling University now King's College London) for their valued input to the committee and their support in the organisation and running of the Spring Conferences. I also want to thank our two students members that have come to the end of the term on the committee, Celia Alvarez-Campano and Marietta Sayegh, as well as two of our committee members who agreed to extend their time on the committee; these are Dr Karen Barton (Dundee Abertay University) and Dr Stuart Gray (University of Glasgow). The Committee extends a warm welcome to our two new student members of the Scottish Section committee, Ms Catriona Thomson (University of Glasgow) and Mr Matevz Arcon (Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen). We are always looking to engage with our membership: if you are keen to join the committee or you have ideas for future symposia topics get in touch (<http://www.nutritionistsociety.org/membership/sections/scottish-section>). ■

Whole Body Metabolism

Dr Wendy Hall, King's College London



This time last year I wrote a piece for the Gazette on the importance of small-scale randomised controlled trials to understand mechanisms of dietary interventions to complement the rise of 'Big Data' in nutritional sciences. If you had told me then that my ongoing human dietary intervention studies would be stopped for six months I would have been horrified. But this is the reality for many of us who currently conduct research aligning with the theme of Whole Body Metabolism.

On 23 March 2020, one of the studies I had just started the first handful of participants on a 12-week dietary intervention, with a range of detailed measures of vascular function, lipid metabolism, and habitual diet already having been taken at their first study visit. Everything had to stop, the specialised dietary intervention was lost, and there were no follow up visits that would enable the data already collected to be used. Eventually, our department began recruiting again to get all the ongoing studies up and running, but it is not proving easy. The numbers of individuals that can occupy our metabolic research facilities on any day are restricted due to distancing rules, and recruitment of participants has slowed down. Starting new studies is a risk during this uncertain period as it may mean wasting resources if they need to be stopped again.

No one knows how this will all end, but for Whole Body Metabolism it could potentially affect the design of human studies in our efforts mitigate disruption by COVID-safe restrictions, or worse,

further lockdowns. What could this mean in practice? Perhaps remote "from your living room" dietary intervention trials will soon be the default approach. Over the last 10 years, wearable technology and apps that can collect data on diet, sleep, physical activity and mental wellbeing have increasingly been used in mechanistic human studies, despite concerns regarding reliability and accuracy. Progress in developing these applications may be hastened by recent events. Blood pressure monitors or actigraphy devices can be sent by courier and participants instructed on how to fit and operate them by video call. Dried blood spot analysis of inflammatory markers or lipids could replace standard blood samples; participants only need to self-administer a finger prick test at home and send samples by post. Questionnaires or detailed diet consultations that were previously carried out on-site could be scheduled over Zoom. In fact, the development of alternative, less burdensome, approaches to collect data on diet-related markers of health could be a good thing to come out of the disruption to research. Furthermore, the year's events have highlighted to many people, the value of science, and the fragility of good health, and as a result we may find that people are more likely to want to participate in scientific research.

It is difficult to envisage a time when detailed mechanistic measures would not be extremely important for nutritional science. Many would now consider nutrition and immunity to be a priority area, which often requires isolation of

fresh blood cells for analysis by flow cytometry on the same day. The most accurate measurement of endothelial function, body composition or liver fat requires specialist equipment and trained operators/analysts. These are just a few examples of techniques that offer mechanistic insight into how diet might influence risk of disease but necessitate a participant study visit. Right now, it is essential that scientists share data and resources to advance technologies available for remote testing during the current hiatus in research activity. I am keen to find out what the wider nutritional science community are thinking.

What are your experiences of adapting your human studies to include remote data collection? Perhaps you are an investigator, PhD student or postdoc who has had to change your research methodology due to the pandemic, or even start new research on previously collected data during the disruption. Do you have any thoughts on how we can learn from these experiences and do excellent research differently in the future? Please share them at the Nutrition Society forum for members, Member-Connect, under the Whole Body Metabolism theme at <https://membership.nutrition-society.org>.

Hopefully, by stimulating some discussion and sharing experiences, we can build on the strengths of our research community and work towards equipping ourselves with strategies to continue producing high impact, illuminating research on the impact of diets on health. ■

Interpretation of observational studies: the good, the bad and the sensational



Save the Date: 18 January 2020

View Programme and register here

We are used to seeing the all-too-familiar headlines in tabloid media predicting doom or, conversely, promising remarkable health effects if we consume particular foods or nutrients. Much of the evidence for these sensational reports comes from observational studies – but are the results reported accurately?

We may blame the media for overkill in the way they report nutrition science, but some of the responsibility lies at the door of researchers. From the communication of relative versus absolute risk, to the popularity of ‘multiple hit’ statistical analyses, or using observational datasets to answer research questions for which they were not designed, there are

common errors in the way we currently use nutritional epidemiology to create public health messages.

This one day online meeting on 18th January 2021 is all about turning these errors into opportunities. We will learn from leading statistician and SACN member, Dr Darren Greenwood, about the pitfalls of epidemiology, while Professor Janet Cade (Leeds) and Dr Lee Hooper (JEA) will explain how to improve the methodology and interpretation of observational data. Professor Christine Williams OBE will discuss the role of observational research in developing dietary guidelines. Finally, award-winning journalist and health editor, Lucy Gornall, will provide tips on how to turn your research into responsible news headlines.

Organiser and Nutrition Society Trustee, Dr Carrie Ruxton, said: “With evidence-based science being at the forefront of developing public health advice, this one-day online event will be an excellent opportunity for students, researchers and nutritionists/dietitians to learn about gold standard methodology and analysis for epidemiology, whilst gaining Association for Nutrition CPD credits”.

As a thank you to the members of the Society for their support this year, and to mark the Nutrition Society’s 80th Anniversary in 2021, this one-day meeting will be free to all members. For non-members, a modest registration fee of £30 will be charged. ■



2021 Events Calendar

Interpretation of observational studies: the good, the bad and the sensational

Online event
18 January 2021

Spring Conference: Gut Microbiome and Health

Hybrid event
29 – 30 March 2021

Irish Section Conference 2021: Nutrition, health and ageing - translating science into practice

Online event
22 – 24 June 2021

Summer Conference: Nutrition in a changing world

Hybrid event
5 – 8 July 2021

Winter Conference: Obesity and the brain

Hybrid event
7 – 8 December 2021

Plus: regular webinars through the Nutrition Society Training Academy (NSTA): www.nutritionandsociety.org/training-academy

All registration fees and early bird deadlines can be found at:
www.nutritionandsociety.org/conferences/our-conferences