

ASN Advisory Committee on Ensuring Trust in Nutrition Science
CALL NOTES
Tuesday, September 26, 2017

Bert Garza, Chair
Sylvia Rowe
Carol Tucker-Foreman
Ed Cooney
John Courtney
Patrick Stover
Cathie Woteki
Catherine Bertini
Robert Steinbrook
Eric Campbell
Martha Field

Sarah Ohlhorst, staff

Dr. Bert Garza welcomed the committee and provided an update. The draft report has gone through the first round of copy editing. Dr. Garza reviewed the revisions and made additional edits, and it is back with the copy editor now. He is still aiming to have a completed report by the end of November, and hopes the edited report will be able to be shared with the committee for review next week.

The first draft recommendation (#1, options A and B) elicited the most interest from the committee. Dr. Garza noted that both options A and B could go forward to the ASN Board given that there are opposing viewpoints, if the committee cannot reach consensus. The Committee supported sending multiple options to the ASN Board. All agreed that the recommendation must reflect the best advice the group has to offer. The writing team will edit the options to add richness to the text before passing it along to the Board. Cathie Woteki, Robert Steinbrook and Sylvia Rowe volunteered to work with the writing team to elaborate the pros and cons for both Recommendation #1, options A and B.

Committee Review of Draft Recommendation 1A

“In carrying out this policy, ASN should avoid activities such as the following: those that are advocacy in nature, the organization and/or implementation of activities sponsored in part or completely by for-profit entities with a financial interest in an activity’s direct and indirect outcomes and avoid participation in risk management undertakings and product promotions.”

Committee members suggested that limiting any ASN advocacy activities should be avoided, as sometimes advocacy is necessary. It was noted that advocacy is a fundamental function of what ASN does - conveying scientific information and educating others – to benefit the membership. A clarification of what is meant by advocacy is needed.

Other items in Recommendation #1, option A also need further clarification. What is a “public or private activity unrelated to the research of interest to ASN’s membership”? How is ASN going

to define an activity outside of the scope of the research conducted by its membership? More criteria around these terms would be useful. It was suggested to change “research of interest to ASN’s membership” to “the research of interest to ASN”. The terms “not-for-profit entities with no real or potential conflicts of interests in the sponsored activity” also need clarification.

Committee Review of Draft Recommendation 1B

“Oversight of all events should be independent of ASN’s board and all others with fiduciary responsibilities to the organization. An example of the type of structure that could meet desirably rigorous standards is a five-member group composed of three ASN distinguished members (such as ASN fellows) and two non-ASN members appointed by the group’s chair with the advice and consent of the oversight group’s membership.”

Committee members felt that the independent oversight group described in option B of draft recommendation #1 would need to be a highly independent group to make recommendations regarding funding. It was suggested that the inclusion of three distinguished ASN members on this group would not allow the group to be truly independent.

It should also be clarified that this group would be advisory in nature, but ultimate decision making would remain with the ASN Board. Committee members suggested that the group chair have no conflicts of interest and that the activities of this group be fully transparent and public. The general principle behind option B needs to be refined and strengthened, but the overall approach is supported by the advisory committee. The recommendation is intended to cover existing as well as future activities, although previous commitments (such as gifts made to ASN or the ASN Foundation to support scholarships and awards) should be honored.

Committee Review of Draft Recommendation 2

A clearinghouse would have to be an extensive, resource-intensive engagement. It was suggested that ASN does not have access to all research misconduct transgressions or the resources necessary to effectively create a clearinghouse for examples of research misconduct. A clearinghouse is not feasible given resources, the legal implications and it would likely only touch on well-known research misconduct examples vs all the actual transgressions that occur.

ASN may develop a case study or white paper approach that highlights specific research misconduct examples to provide a synopsis and take-away messages to its membership. This could be an ongoing activity for ASN as circumstances may suggest. Eric Campbell volunteered to assist the writing team in redrafting this recommendation to show how ASN can bring attention to research misconduct examples/lessons that are in the public domain.

Next Steps

Dr. Garza suggested that committee members select five of the ten recommendations that they strongly feel should be moved forward. Sarah Ohlhorst will resend the draft recommendations and ask committee members to select their top five recommendations to move forward within the next two weeks.

ASN President Mary Ann Johnson has shown interest in joining calls of the Advisory Committee. Committee members felt the committee’s discussions and recommendations are not

far enough along and that adding another voice to the discussions would not be beneficial at this time. However, having the President join calls now in a listening mode also was met with mixed reactions. She could be invited to discussions during future calls, e.g., as a briefing re recommendations that will move forward.

The next call will be held on **Tuesday, October 24th at 11:00am Eastern**. An email reminder and additional materials will be sent prior to the call date. Executive summaries of the report will not likely be available before October 24th, but will be developed in the near future.

The call adjourned at 10:59 AM.