Celebrating 75 years of the British Journal of Nutrition

- Nutrition Greats: John Yudkin
- Interviews with Professor Susan Jebb and Ms Heather Kelman
- A day in the life of a Post-doctoral Researcher
There is a palpable positivity in the air which has a lot to do with the fact we can now see each other face-to-face; whether it’s at work, social occasions or even Nutrition Society events. This issue looks back as well as forwards. Back to the life of Professor John Yudkin (pages 4-5) who was instrumental in highlighting the issues of high sugar diets, and back even further across the 80 illustrious years of The Nutrition Society as we celebrate this great milestone (page 15). Make sure you check out our conference report (pages 11-13) and read the reflections of this year’s Blaxter award winner (page 7). The article about the challenges of running a clinical trial during the pandemic (page 27) is definitely worth a read.

But we also look forward as we celebrate the leadership of three nutrition professionals as they take up new roles in Food Standards Scotland, the Food Standards Agency (pages 13-14) and the Association for Nutrition (page 9). We look forward, as well, to the International Congress of Nutrition in Japan this December so it’s great to hear from two members of the organising committee (page 20).

I hope you enjoy this issue and appreciate, like me, the wonderful achievements of our members and the hard work of everyone who gives their time to make the Society a continued success.

I am writing this in flight from Istanbul to London, on my first international trip in over two years. I’m returning from the first Georgian International Nutrition and Health Conference in Tbilisi, which was sponsored by The Nutrition Society and hosted by the new Georgian Nutrition Society, founded in 2019. This was followed a few days later by a joint conference between The Nutrition Society and Sabin Gilker Food Research Foundation entitled “Nutrition for healthcare professionals—Achieving Healthcare Through Diet”. I was delighted and honoured to be invited to open and present at both of these exciting international events, which attracted large audiences from the medical and other healthcare professions.

Healthcare professionals sit at a critical interface between evidence-based nutrition and the general public, placing them in a key position to provide diet and lifestyle advice for the maintenance of health, and prevention of disease. The Society’s support of these two conferences highlighted the importance of nutrition sciences and its professions. Further progress in this area includes the publication of two papers in the British Journal of Nutrition, which outline the development of the Undergraduate Curriculum in Nutrition for Medical Doctors which was published last September by the Association for Nutrition with support from The Nutrition Society. Thanks to all involved with progressing the Society’s ambition to build our relationship with the medical profession, particularly Dr Bernadette Moore as her term of office as Council Member for Medical comes to an end. The Society recognises individuals who have made significant and outstanding contributions globally to the advancement of nutrition science by the award of an Honorary Fellowship with the Society, which includes the newly introduced post-nominal ‘HonFNS’. It is always an honour to present these prestigious awards at the Annual Reception. We were also delighted to be able to invite all our Honorary Fellows to a lunch at the RAIF Club in London before these presentations, it was such a pleasure spending time with so many of our Honorary Fellows. In commemoration of the Society’s 80th anniversary, special awards to recognise outstanding service by a Nutrition Society member to the Society and Rising Star Awards were also presented at the Annual Reception. It was lovely to see so many of our members at this event celebrating with our awardees.

It has been a great pleasure for the Society to host a number of face-to-face and hybrid events over the past six months. The first hybrid Winter Conference was held in the Royal Society of Medicine in London in December on “Obesity and the Brain”. This was an excellent event with outstanding nutritional science, and opportunities to meet and socialise with friends and colleagues in person. In the New Year, a joint conference between the French Nutrition Society and the Society, entitled ‘Where Urban Policy Meets Scientists’ was held in Lille, was moved online at short notice due to COVID-19 restrictions. Thankfully, the quick response and professionalism from The Nutrition Society staff made the delivery of this impromptu virtual event a success. This was followed by the in person Irish Section Postgraduate conference in Coleraine, which was a very successful event. I never fail to be impressed by the excellent research presentations of our student members, which are delivered with such professionalism and confidence. The Scottish Section’s conference on ‘Nutrition, Immune Function and Infectious Disease’ in Edinburgh was another successful hybrid event held in March and we look forward to the Summer Conference in Sheffield on 12 – 15 July.

I am extremely grateful for the advice, support and collegiality of my fellow Trustees. I offer my sincere thanks to Professor Chris Seal, as he comes to the end of his 6-year term of office as Honorary Treasurer. Chris has steered the Society’s finances through challenging and unprecedented times with conscientiousness and competency. With the careful oversight of our CEO and with the support and collegiality of our Trustees. I’d like to close by wishing everyone an enjoyable Summer and well-deserved holidays.
John Yudkin’s life before Pure, White and Deadly

Professor Michael Yudkin, Emeritus Fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford University

John Yudkin was born on 8 August 1910, three years after his parents Louis and Sarah had immigrated to London from a shetll in what is today Belarus. Louis was a refugee and John was six years old, leaving Sarah a widow with four boys, of whom John was the third. A fifth child was born posthumously.

Yudkin won a scholarship to Hackney Downs School (formerly the Grocers’ Company’s School) at the age of 11, and another from there to Chelsea Polytechnic. After gaining his London BSc in 1930, he matriculated as a scholar at Christ’s College, Cambridge, and graduated BA in Biochemistry at the age of 20 in 1931.

An interest in bacterial biochemistry prompted him to apply for a PhD in the Department of Biochemistry at Cambridge under the supervision of Marjory Stephenson, the foremost microbiologist of her generation. Stephenson accepted him as a graduate student and arranged a grant to fund his work. However, the grant was cancelled at the end of 1930, but Stephenson generously paid him out of her own pocket until an official post could be found for him. His PhD thesis on “adaptive enzymes” (subsequently termed “induced enzyme synthesis”) was accepted in 1935.

Yudkin had long wanted to study medicine and, in 1934, he began pre-clinical studies in Cambridge, funding himself by teaching physiology and biochemistry to medical students. In the same year, he undertook clinical studies at The London Hospital since Cambridge had no clinical school at the time. He graduated MB, BChir in 1938, and was appointed Director of Medical Studies at King’s College Hospital at the age of 26. In the same year, he began his research at the Dunn Nutritional Laboratory in Cambridge.

His studies of the nutritional status of school children in Cambridge showed that children from a poorer area of Cambridge were shorter and lighter, and had lower haemoglobin levels and a weaker grip, than those from wealthier areas. Children from large families in poor areas scored particularly badly in these measurements. Studies of children from three industrial towns in Scotland pointed in the same direction. These results made it clear that, in many households, the total family income was not sufficient to ensure an adequate and healthy diet for the children.

During the Second World War, Yudkin served in the Royal Army Medical Corps and was posted to Sierra Leone. While there, he contracted a skin disease that was prevalent among local African soldiers and discovered that it was due, not to an infection as had been believed, but to a deficiency – of riboflavin – surprising soldiers and discovered that it was due, not to an infection as

John Yudkin, Emeritus Fellow of Kellogg College, Oxford University, takes up the story.

The accompanying article by Professor Jack Winkler overleaf takes up the story.
Are Learned Societies Still Relevant?

Mark Hollingsworth, CEO

Despite having a role that entails significant travel, I do not travel well. Waking up in a hotel room having slept poorly is not an uncommon experience for me – jet lag, a stuffy room, dehydrated, even one too many Negroines, are often to blame. However, I recently woke in my hotel room, on a trip to Istanbul, having slept poorly because of a vivid nightmare.

I recall entering a very large conference hall, with seating for 1,000 people, all empty. On the central screen the slide welcomed everyone to ‘The Nutrition Society Summer Conference’. I sat and waited, and waited. No one came. In a panic I rushed out of the room and asked a member of the event staff why no one had arrived for this learned society scientific conference. The member of staff looked at me and said ‘What is a learned society?’ A nightmare!

We live in our sector in a world of uncertainties post-Covid, and costs rising exponentially. Will membership of the Society decline? Will people stay away from face-to-face conferences? Will Plan S completely change the funding landscape of journals? Is travel, even modest distances, a thing of the past? Will budget pressures continue? I suspect these many concerns are nightmares. I suspect these many concerns are nightmares.

A learned society exists to promote an academic discipline, profession or group of related disciplines. Membership may be open to all, it may require a qualification, or may be an honour conferred by an election. Activities traditionally include: holding conferences for dissemination and discussion of new research; publishing academic journals; and collaboration through networks. Their success can be measured by longevity – the oldest in the UK being the Royal Society, founded in 1660. The Nutrition Society is young by comparison, having formed 81 years ago. But, compared with many small or medium sized businesses established, and later declined, over that 81 year period, it is a model of operational success.

Why am I therefore having nightmares over an existential threat?

There are trends emerging, only small, but they are worthy of our attention now, before they become substantial. Membership levels are declining slowly. Retaining young members has always been an issue once their academic studies are complete, but we are now seeing mid-career members leaving (other learned societies are seeing similar trends). The Society’s conferences have seen no growth in numbers of delegates for many years, despite heavy subsidies from the Society to reduce delegate fees. The Society’s journals are faced with competition from new publications, rising costs, and reducing academic budgets to cover the costs of publishing research.

Therefore, perhaps the days of those involved in an academic discipline automatically becoming a member of their respective learned society are over. Is this 350+ year old learned society membership model no longer fit for purpose? Are four day long scientific conferences, held between Monday to Friday, no longer feasible with the many other demands on people’s time?

After 350+ years, let us not now ‘fall asleep at the wheel’ and watch the gradual decline and fall of such a successful model. Learned societies play a key role in developing academic disciplines. They use their funds to invest in travel grants, studentships and bursaries, fund conferences, provide platforms for scientific communications – they support members at all stages of their careers. We need to find innovative ways to remain relevant to today’s and future generations. If I emerge from a future nightmare, I hope I will not encounter someone saying ‘Oh, I remember learned societies, didn’t they once organise conferences?’

The 2021 Nutrition Society Blaxter Award: reflections of an Animal Scientist

Professor Iilias Kyriazakis, Queens University Belfast

As well as being a great honour and recognition for my work, winning the 2021 Nutrition Society Blaxter Award for my contribution to the field of Whole Body Metabolism and Animal Nutrition also signifies the completion of a cycle in my career. I was awarded by the Society its highest honour bestowed on its younger members, the Silver Medal, in 1986. At that time the Medal was awarded to nutritionist below the age of 35, who had shown promise in their early research career in nutritional sciences. The Blaxter Award, awarded 26 years later, is for the contribution of my whole career to its subject. I hope that The Nutrition Society feels somehow vindicated in recognising my ‘potential’ a quarter a century ago!

I was the first animal nutritionist to be awarded the Silver Medal and remain the only animal nutritionist to have done so. To me this signifies the development of the Society over the last 30 years or so. When I became a member as a young postgraduate in 1988, it was dominated by scientists with interests in human nutrition. This dominance has waned over the years and reflects the ascendancy of human nutrition as the dominant field in nutrition research. It is a natural progression, reflecting the impact of nutrition on human health, and the development of methodologies and techniques to assess this. The recognition of nutritional epidemiology as a powerful tool to understand the impact of nutrition on population health has also contributed towards this. It is not surprising, therefore, that animal nutrition research has increasingly been viewed as mature science, whereas human nutrition has been addressing the big questions.

Although the Society has made several efforts to continue to cater for the interests of animal nutritionists, their membership within the Society has declined over the same period. Many scientists operating in the field have joined other learned societies who appear to cater more for their specialist interests and, in several instances, the number of research animal nutritionists has dwindled. However, more recently there has been an increased interest in the contribution of human diet to climate change, something which is made through the link between the production of feed, livestock production in particular, to the greenhouse gas emissions. Livestock emissions, of course, arise mostly from the feed they consume and the nutrients they excrete. The debate over what sustainable human diets look like, and the contribution of both plant and animal-based foods to human health and sustainability, is therefore an active one. Addressing this issue requires precise measurements of the impact of the production of feed ingredients, how livestock utilise the feed they consume, and the nature of their excretions. The use and consequences of sustainable alternative or novel feed ingredients for livestock have opened new research avenues for animal nutritionists, as well as requiring a closer collaboration between human and animal nutritionists, and with other scientific disciplines.

I view the recent establishment of The Nutrition Society Blaxter Award, of which I am its second recipient, within the context of this debate and the challenges and opportunities it provides. After all, one of the major contributions of Sir Kenneth Blaxter was the prediction of the amount of methane, one of the major greenhouse gases produced by ruminants. His insights in this topic continue to be of relevance today and, for this reason, I feel particularly honoured to have been given an award that bears his name.
Dr Alison Tedstone
A career case study of the new President of the Association for Nutrition

After 20 years in the civil service, and almost 10 as the Chief Nutritionist on Public Health England (PHE) and the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC), I aim to continue to support nutritionist professionals from research to implementation across all areas of practice in my new role as Chair of the Nutrition Society (ANN). Nutrition is an area where opinion can outstrip evidence all too easily. We must guard against this to have long term influence and maintain credibility while acting in the best interests of the public.

Nutrition has been of growing political interest over time. Not only because of the cost of poor diet and obesity to the NHS but also the economic importance of food businesses to the UK. Food journalism is high profile as are some individuals with very particular views. Everyone likes a silver bullet, but in my experience, few live up to expectations. Everyone likes a silver bullet, but in my experience, few live up to expectations.

How did your early career develop?
The Philips Enquiry into BSE led to joining the Food Standards Agency (FSA) to lead the secretariat of the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN). The first report produced by SACN was on Salt and Health. This was the scientific basis for the salt reduction programme which combined voluntary structured reformulation with consumer awareness campaigns alongside monitoring. The programme led to large reductions in everyday foods with 11% reduction in population salt intakes. This demonstrated the importance of science in policy making.

What have been some of the challenges and learnings you have faced?
At the FSA, I contributed to the application of nutrition including the development of front of pack nutrition labelling and the nutrient profile model to define high saturated fat, salt, and sugar products (HFSS) for the first controls on television advertising of less healthy foods in the UK.

These were all seen as innovative by some but interfering and anti-business by others. That narrative led to nutrition being moved into the Department of Health under the coalition government in 2010, when the Public Health Responsibility Deal (PHRD) became the new way of working with business. With a few notable exceptions, the Deal was not the great success seen with the earlier salt campaign. The learning here is the importance of clear targets and robust monitoring.

What opportunities have you been able to take?
In 2012, nutrition was moved to PHE. This coincided with the SACN report on Carbohydrates and Health and the recommendation to halve the dietary reference value for free sugars. To achieve SACN’s recommendations, Sugar: Evidence to Action made recommendations on structural interventions going beyond information and education including fiscal intervention, further advertising restrictions, promotional controls and structured reformulation. SACN and PHE’s work led to a step change in obesity policy and new legislation – including the soft drinks industry levy (SDL), a structured and closely monitored reformulation programme and promises of promotional and advertising controls of HFSS.

What impact did COVID-19 have on public health nutrition?
COVID-19 led to wider political recognition that excess weight was causing an immediate threat to the NHS with the overrepresentation in Intensive Care of people living with obesity, and enabled further policy progress. It also led to PHE’s closure and the relocation of the team into the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC).

The pandemic was associated with large increases in calorie sales, children living with obesity, and food poverty. Our diet continues to fall short of dietary recommendations. Delaying further advertising and promotional restrictions won’t help these to be met.

What are your hopes for the future of nutrition science?
More structured and upstream interventions will be needed if the tide is to be turned. There will be challenges as the economic pressures on business grow. This, then, is the challenge for appropriately qualified nutritionists; to protect the public and support health at all stages of the food chain. They will need to influence agriculture, horticulture and population health policy by promotion of evidence-based approaches, and by supporting the public to improve their dietary health. What have been some of your career highlights?

I have been privileged to worked with brilliant people in the civil service, academia, charities, professional bodies and in the food industry. I am very proud of my team and SACN’s achievements. Good quality work and enabling change is dependent on a willingness to go that extra mile. I have been a member of the Nutrition Society for most of my adult life and helped establish the ANN.

What are your plans as president of the Association for Nutrition (ANN)?
During my tenure as President of the ANN, I hope to work with staff, committee members and volunteers to continue to support professional standards across the nutrition community and to ensure good governance though oversight and challenge. I also plan to work with Helen Clark, the Chief Executive of ANN, to support the development of staff, and collaboration with The Nutrition Society. I hope that we will have a positive outcome to ANN’s application for a Royal Charter which, if successful, would be a great honour for ANN, recognising our expertise in maintaining high standards of education, practice and regulation of nutritionists and, through this, promoting the health of the public.

Honorary Fellow
The Society’s newly published Career Section provides a hub of career-related resources and inspiration accessible to everyone at all career stages. Scan to find out more:

Looking for Career Support?

Awards and memberships
- Honorary Fellow
Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health
- Honorary Fellow
Nutrition Society, member since member since 1984
- Honorary Fellow
Royal College of Physicians

Jobs
2013-2021
Chief Nutritionist and Head of Diet, Obesity and Physical Activity Division, Public Health England
2012-2013 and 2021-22
Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)
2006-2010
Head of Nutrition Science Unit Food Standards Agency (FSA)
2010-2012
Department of Health
2001-2006
Principal Nutritionist – FSA
1992-2001
Lecturer in Human Nutrition London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM)
1992-1996
Freelance lecturer
1988-1991
Postdoctoral Research Fellow (MRC) Metabolic Research Laboratory, Oxford
1983-1984
Research Assistant Clinical Pharmacology, Royal Free Hospital, London
1982-1983
Research Associate George Washington University, Washington D.C., USA.

Qualifications
1988
PhD Physiology St. George’s Hospital Medical School, University of London – Doctoral project and thesis: “Factors affecting postprandial thermogenesis or How does a meal stimulate metabolic rate?”
1982
BSc Hons Physiology Queen Elizabeth College (now Kings College), University of London

University of London
1982-1983
Research Associate George Washington University, Washington D.C., USA.

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1982-1983
Research Associate George Washington University, Washington D.C., USA.
TRUSTEE UPDATE

From Council Member to Trustee
Professor John Brameld, Honorary Science Officer

I am just coming to the end of my first year as Trustee and Honorary Science Officer (HSO) and I have to say that I didn’t really appreciate the amount of work the Trustees do “behind the scenes”! As well as attending Council and Trustees meetings (3 each per year), and chairing the various Society committees, the Trustees regularly deal with things via email or have online ‘teams’ meetings for quick discussions. All of which is efficiently coordinated and managed by the incredible Society office staff and CEO, Mark Hollingsworth.

For those of you who do not know me, I have been an academic at the University of Nottingham since 2001, which is also when I rejoined the Society. Until recently I was the Society’s Council member for Animal Nutrition (2015-2021), during which my aim was to re-establish links with Animal Nutritionists. We achieved that to some extent via holding or sponsoring joint meetings with the British Society for Animal Science (BSAS) and the development of a new Animal Nutrition textbook jointly produced by the Society and BSAS. The latter is well under way, and we are aiming for a first draft later this year, with publication planned for 2023; thereby becoming the 7th textbook in The Nutrition Society Textbook Series. Spirulina Althansadou, Scotland’s Rural College, is a co-editor of the textbook and has taken over from me as Council member for Animal Nutrition. I know that she has plans to further enhance links with those working in Animal Nutrition.

My research in Nutritional Biochemistry is often applicable to all mammals and I know historically that developments in animal nutrition can impact on human nutrition and vice versa. Hence, one of the things I would like to do as HSO is to increase the opportunities for interactions at our various meetings and conferences, particularly for Early Career Researchers (PGR students and postdocs). I certainly benefitted from such interactions as a postdoc in the 1990s. As HSO, I co-chair the Science Committee which manages the development and approval of all conference programmes planned roughly 1-2 years ahead. Hence my aim is likely to take a bit of time but, hopefully, will start to develop symposia and programmes that enable greater interaction across animal and human nutrition disciplines, particularly in relation to cellular and molecular mechanisms and whole-body metabolism, my specific areas of interest.

Before I started, the previous HSO, Frank Theis, along with the Honorary Programmes Officer, Bernard Corfe, had initiated a review of the Society conference programmes, with the initial proposal presented at my first Trustee meeting in Manchester in October 2021. We have since asked Council and Science committee members for feedback and the main outcomes have been a unanimous decision to increase opportunities for early career researchers to present at our meetings, a decision to try out an expanded format for the Summer conference (similar to FENS, but remaining annual) and discussions (still ongoing) around how we might enhance interactions across the student membership. One of the positive outcomes of the recent pandemic has been the various online and hybrid meetings, that allowed greater participants’ attendance by our international members. We aim to continue this whenever possible, but numerous discussions and past experience has led to the realisation that hybrid conferences are very dependent upon the infrastructure of the conference centre. Hence future events and conferences are likely to be a mix of hybrid and in-person only (possibly with recordings) and likely to be a factor in deciding where conferences will be held but will continue to move around the UK and Ireland.

Finally, if anyone is considering getting involved in the Society, my advice would be “go for it”! We regularly have positions available and it is a great way to meet your peers and potential future collaborators. Maybe apply to be on a Committee or to become a Council member, like I did? Email the Society office if you want to know more, or check out the website for committee and Trustee vacancies. All members are welcome to put their names forward.

I thoroughly enjoy the opportunities it has provided to meet and get to know new people and discuss nutritional science in a relaxed, socialable atmosphere! If you see me at a future conference, please come and say hello, but be prepared for the mix of South Yorkshire and Nottingham accents!

Conference Overview: Obesity and the brain

Following the restrictions and challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Winter Conference 2021 was a welcome opportunity to meet in-person again.

The rising prevalence of obesity is a global public health priority due to associations with reduced life expectancy, lower quality of life, poorer mental and physical health, reduced economic productivity and, more recently, the worse COVID-19 prognosis. Topically titled ‘Obesity and the brain’, the conference covered the impact of obesity and diet on brain structure and function, and shed light on the current challenges for behaviour change interventions.

Day One
Professor Louise Dye, University of Leeds, opened the conference with discussion on the relationship between obesity and cognitive function. Given the widely reported increases in stress during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was timely to explore the potential effects of stress driven fat deposition and weight gain. Professor Dye noted that dietary interventions including polyphenols have shown beneficial effects on cognitive function in middle aged and older adults, and appear to impact on chronic fatigue – a key enduring symptom of COVID-19.

Dr Veronica Witte, Max Plank Institute, followed by highlighting the impact of obesity and diet on brain structure and function. Using neuroimaging data, including the LIFE-Adult study, Dr Witte showed how overweight and obesity are intertwined with markers of brain health in the general population. Higher BMI and visceral fat accumulation correlate with worse cognitive performance, possibly as a result of systemic low-grade inflammation. Subsequently, diet may help to promote brain plasticity, affect brain function and structure.

Although mid-life obesity is associated with alterations in brain structure and decreased cognitive function, the underlying mechanisms remain largely unknown. Professor Amanda Kiliaan, Radboud University, looked at the effect of white adipose tissue as a proposed mechanism. Using preliminary results from the BARICO study, she highlighted how dysregulation of white adipose tissue appears to increase the number and size of adipocytes and inflammation of the tissue, and negatively impact vascular and brain health.

The first plenary lecture delivered by Professor Danu Small, Yale University, looked at nutrient sensing and predictive neural coding. The metabolic signals generated during glucose metabolism were found to regulate central circuits involved in reinforcement, so that nutritional properties of food can be learned.

Over 165 delegates attended at the Royal Society in London, with a further 171 joining virtually from across 17 countries.
Symposium two began with an insightful talk from Dr. Helen Croker, World Cancer Research Fund International, looking at the current challenges around behaviour change interventions targeting children. Dr. Croker highlighted that the home environment is more likely to influence behaviour than the school environment, with positive parent feeding practices being key to success.

Professor Falko Sniehotta, University of Twente, followed by discussing the behavioural perspective of maintaining weight loss. Whilst there are many interventions that successfully lead to short term weight loss, sustained success requires change to the obesogenic environment.

The final session of Day One saw the awarding of the Cuthbertson Medal of Oxford. The medal lecture entitled: ‘Low-energy total diet replacement programmes – from bench to bedside’, explored Dr Astbury’s work on the origins of low-energy total diet replacements for weight loss. Whilst there are many interventions that successfully lead to short term weight loss, sustained success requires change to the obesogenic environment.

Professor Rachel Batterham, University College London, opened symposium Three by discussing how tanycytes have emerged as a locus for change in the control of feeding and energy balance. Professor Rachel Batterham, UCL, followed by discussing the role of the gut in regulating food intake and energy balance; highlighting how bariatric surgery can positively alter the gut hormone profile to reduce hunger and preference for sweet and high fat foods. New data show how drugs, such as semaglutide, offer promise as a gut hormone-based pharmacotherapy.

Professor Susan Ozanne, University of Cambridge, concluded the symposium by examining how the nutritional environment to which a developing foetus is exposed impacts long-term cardio-metabolic health. Using diet induced obese mouse models, Professor Ozanne explored how impaired glucose tolerance during pregnancy leads to reduced insulin resistance, cardiac dysfunction, hypertension and fatty liver, even when the offspring is born lean. This is a growing concern since 1 in 7 births are now affected by gestational diabetes.

Symposium four looked at personalised approaches for tackling obesity, with advances in cost and time efficiency of genome sequencing fuelling interest for precision nutrition. Using data from the Food4me intervention, Dr Carlos Celis-Morales, University of Glasgow, concluded that more controlled and comparative studies with cost-benefit analysis for improving behaviour and health are needed. Associate Professor Henrik Munch Roager, University of Copenhagen, followed with an interesting talk on how microbiota enterotypes impact the amount of energy extracted from food, and their important role in predicting weight loss from high fibre diets.

Professor Janet Treasure, King’s College London, delivered a fascinating plenary lecture to close the conference, looking at the new approaches being used to treat eating disorders. Whilst historic methods of cognitive psychotherapy have delivered low recovery rates, newer approaches using virtual reality, brain training and stimulation have shown significant improvements in eating disorder recovery rates.

Papers from the speakers will be available in Proceedings of the Nutrition Society over the coming months, as well as all original communications presented at the meeting.
The last couple of years have been challenging for all. The pandemic, its ongoing challenges, and uncertainty, have made us all consider our priorities personally, professionally and financially. As the Society’s Honorary Membership Officer, I recognise the importance of meeting the needs of our members more than ever, ensuring we provide support and benefits to our members throughout their careers in the field of nutritional science.

Over the past year the Membership Committee has had a restless year. We have welcomed new faces and said goodbye to several previous members. Firstly I would like to thank Dr Dean Sewell (former chair), Dr Colette Short (Industry Representative), Kui Sum (Student Representative), Dr Anna Gryka-Macphail (Policy Representative) and Dr Spindola Almanasaddu (Animal Nutrition Representative) for all their work over the last few years. The Committee now comprises representatives from membership and various sectors of nutritional science. You can view all Committee members via the Society’s website and chat to them about membership of the Society via Member-Connect or at an in-person conference.

This Committee is working on supporting member-focused activities within the Society. Current work includes plotting the membership journey to illustrate what benefits are useful at the various stages of your career – from student to full member and beyond. The Society is working on an exciting new project to involve members and their opinions in various initiatives and projects within the Society – so watch this space, we will be calling you for input from time to time. We are also currently looking at ways to enhance tools for University Ambassadors to support projects within the Society – so watch this space, we will be updating you on this.

In addition to knowing your membership benefits, we feel it is important to create a sense of belonging and community within the Society. We see many colleagues and friends at the society meetings but we also offer our Member-Connect platform to enable communication in between events. This is an engagement platform exclusively for members to be able to discuss hot topics, form new contacts and collaborations, and access offers and news, not always available on our website. It is straightforward and easy to use (trust me… if I can use it so can you), and you are free to get involved in as much, or as little, as you wish. If you haven’t already had a look please do join and build your network, dip into the conversations and see what it’s all about! We have also created some instructions to add Member-Connect to your device to allow you quick access; they can be located here: https://www.nutritionsociety.org/member-connect.

As Summer is nearing, I am delighted to be once again attending the Society’s AGM in person. I look forward to listening to some inspiring scientific talks to continue my own professional development, and very much look forward to meeting fellow members. Please introduce yourself and talk to me about any ideas, questions or thoughts on membership, or any of the other Society activities when you see me.

If you have any issues, questions, or feedback, please contact the Membership Team via membership@nutritionsociety.org.

MEMBERSHIP

Early Career Opportunity – Stamp Your CV with the NSTA

One of the Society’s four priorities in the current Strategic Plan is to support the careers and interests of the membership. The objective is to engage members at all careers stages, particularly early careers, and to enhance the professional skills of those professionals who want to contribute to the nutritional science discipline.

The Nutrition Society Training Academy (NSTA) is committed to supporting members in its part in delivering activities to support the Society’s objectives. The NSTA hosts training sessions which are open to members from academia, industry, or the public sector, to take up this opportunity with the NSTA. The NSTA use the platform to disseminate your research globally, whilst building confidence and polishing up on presenting skills before presenting on the larger stages at in-person conferences. So, if you are within 10 years of graduating, have exciting research to share, and are looking to add Nutrition Society activity to your CV, then apply today.

Further details and the application form can be found here: https://www.nutritionsociety.org/host-webinar or contact training@nutritionsociety.org to discuss applying further.

Celebrating the 80th anniversary of The Nutrition Society: A personal reflection

Dr Margaret Ashwell OBE

One day, my great-grandchildren might ask me what I did in the terrible COVID-19 pandemic in the early 2020s. "I turned myself from a sort of nutrition scientist into a sort of nutrition historian", I shall say.

I spent quite a bit of 2020 planning the blue plaque for Elsie Widdowson which was successfully unveiled in June 2021.

Then at the start of the January 2021 lockdown, I started a new historical project. My inspiration for this project came from spotting a book from 1991(2) on my bookshelves whilst lying on my Platies mat on the floor of my office. An update would make a good project for The Nutrition Society’s 80th anniversary, I thought. Mark Hollingsworth (CEO) and Professor Julie Lovegrove (President), agreed. I'm grateful to them, and also to Cassandra Ellis, the Society’s Science Director, who has helped me with this project.

I had played a small role in the previous volume. In 1987, June Schlucke, who ran the Society almost single-handedly from 1967 to 1984, alerted me to some cassette tape recordings made by the Society’s archivist, Dr Molly Copping. Reading the preface to the previous volume, I have now realised that these early tapes were made at the request of Dr WJ Darby from Vanderbilt University in USA. I mentioned their existence to Elsie Widdowson, and she asked for further transcripts to complete her ‘little book’, as she called it. My part was to get the early tapes transcribed and the originals are now safely in the Nutrition Society archives.

I was fascinated by all of these early tapes. One was the joint interview with Robert McCanse and Elsie Widdowson made in 1970 by Molly. That tape played a very important part in my life. It was one of the reasons that I decided to ask the famous pair if I could write a book about them(3) and I’ve never regretted that decision.

Now back to my most recent historical volume(4). I contacted all the people who had been Nutrition Society Presidents since 1991, together with all those who had been awarded Honorary Fellowships in that time. At each President agreed to contribute and ten of the Fellows too. I asked them to tell me about their careers in nutrition, with special reference to the role that the Society has played. My immense gratitude goes to all of them.

On reading and editing these contributions, I was staggered by all the amazing achievements they recount, just one word of caution. Don’t read these and think they must have had a charmed existence. I bet every one of them could have also told you about things that went wrong for them. I certainly could have done. My favourite quotation is from the Lebanese writer, Kahlil Gibran: “Your pain is the breaking of the shell that encloses your understanding”. Everyone goes through experiences that are very painful at the time. But once you get over them, you realise just how much you have learned from them. About others. About yourself.

The other thing that has struck me on reading these recollections is the many mentions of the wonderful social events that have always accompanied the Society meetings. Why do I sound surprised? They have been amazing and I’m so lucky to have participated in many of them. We have had a strange couple of years since the emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and all our conferences had to be virtual. However, the Society now hosts some hybrid events which will not only help to boost inclusivity for those not able to get to the venue, but will also bring back these social interactions for those who want or need them. If you have the opportunity to attend a Society meeting in person, do so!

Elsie ended her preface by hoping that these stories and recollections would inspire present members and others who had been concerned with the history of nutrition over the past 50 years. We now have a Society which has celebrated its 80th Anniversary. Let’s hope that these stories can inspire even more people, and that the idea of recording the Presidents’ stories continues when The Nutrition Society is celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Tell us about your career path from dietitian to Chair of FSA?

After my degree in nutrition science and professional training, I applied to be a Cambridge University PhD student. I was trained in dietetics and went on to do a degree in dietetics, but then I was interested in the science side of dietetics. I think for me, the research training has taught me to read and understand lots of material, think hard and ask searching questions and I try to use these skills to add value. As an academic, I’ve tried to give evidence to policymakers in a way that supports their decision-making, and that ‘honest-broker’ role is not so very different as Chair of the FSA.

Obviously, having experience of chairing committees, working with policymakers and engaging with diverse stakeholders are all really important to enabling a high performing FSA Board. As Chair of the Board, it’s important to be able to think strategically and look ahead, which is something we do all the time in research when you are trying to develop and test new ideas and build a team. You also need to be resilient, and years of failed grant applications have certainly taught me that!

The challenges as Chair of the FSA are different from those in leading a research team, but in both cases, I think you need a strong sense of purpose, a vision for how things can be better and the drive and commitment to get things done.

What changes would you like to see in the British food landscape?

We are at an extraordinary moment for UK food policy. Our exit from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine is reshaping global food systems and public attitudes to food. These challenging times also present a real opportunity to reshape food systems.

I was a member of the advisory group for the National Food Strategy, the independent review by Henry Dimbleby, which provided a powerful analysis of the challenges we face and a suite of recommendations. As Chair of the FSA, I am now talking with others in government about how we can make the changes that are needed. There has been longstanding agreement of the importance of food safety – indeed it speaks to the origins of the FSA. I think that now there is also a shared vision for a food system that provides healthier and more sustainable food, delivered equitably too. The challenges which may not be ‘what’, but ‘how’ we can achieve this.

What role will nutrition science play in the work of FSA?

It’s the FSA’s job to represent consumer interests in relation to food in government and our research shows that more than half of those surveyed were concerned about the healthiness of their personal diet. We will use our science and evidence on consumer behaviour to support the development of policies that make it easier for people to meet nutritional recommendations. And we want to ensure that nutritional information is communicated to consumers in a way that is accurate, clear and makes it easy for people to make healthier choices.

There are also some areas where FSA has specific duties which involve nutrition science. For example, following EU exit we run the authorisation process for new food and animal feed products. Alongside looking at whether these foods are safe, we want to know what impact they are likely to have on what we eat. For example, in considering meat or dairy substitutes or alternative proteins we want to know what environmental benefits, we also need to be mindful of how they might be consumed and what impact they may have on nutritional intake.

How will FSA work with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to encourage more people to adopt healthier diets?

In England, policy responsibility for nutrition rests with DHSC, but we also work closely with the Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Assembly who have their own strategies and goals. Our aim is to use our evidence and consumer insights to help achieve policy goals. For example, alongside being a member of the Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework which sets out a vision to guide long term decision making about food. In Wales, we are offering support to the Welsh government as they develop their Community Food Strategy, to encourage the supply of locally sourced food. In England, we are working with the Department for Education and DHSC to look at how we can assist to the nutritional standards for food served in school, which I hope might evolve into wider assurance schemes to safeguard nutritional standards in other public food systems.

One new area we are developing with DHSC, Defra, and the devolved countries, is the idea for a Food Data Transparency Partnership. This has the potential to provide a granular reporting mechanism on progress towards nutritional targets. In time, I hope it may also provide insights into new interventions to change the supply chain and consumer behaviour towards healthier diets.

What would you like to achieve by the end of your first term of office?

My first year is nearing its end and I’m pleased to say we’ve made good progress. Most notably we have released our new National Food Strategy for the next 5 years. This is a roadmap recommitting the FSA to its core mission – ‘Food You Can Trust’. That sets out how we will work to deliver on three key objectives: food is safe; food is what it says it is; and an evidence-based objective – to play our part in transforming the food system to ensure food is healthier and more sustainable. It’s a step change in what we do, expanding our area of interest beyond food safety. In doing so, we’ve opened the door to new conversations across government. I’m keen for FSA to be the ‘glue’ that helps achieve better joint-up on food policy across departments and across the UK. We are starting to see joint projects emerge where we can use the skills and expertise in the FSA to support other parts of government in delivering on their responsibilities in relation to food. I hope our new strategy will also extend our links with academia and I’d urge members of the Nutrition Society to join the FSA Chair and Chief Executive Regular blog update by scanning the QR code below:

You Can Trust’ and I’m so proud to lead this multi-partner, regulator, watchdog and convenor and at all our public board meetings we are doing and asking questions. The challenge for the FSA Board is to balance our ambition to make a difference with the resources we have available.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I feel incredibly fortunate to have two jobs I love, at the University of Oxford and the FSA. It does often feel like two full-time jobs, but there is certainly never a dull moment!

Despite a career in food, as Chair of FSA I have learnt so much about new areas of the food system, in particular, my role as a member of various committees which have given me great insights into the work of FSA and the responsibilities of food policies and public attitudes to food. These are critical moments for the FSA.

We are at an extraordinary moment for food policy. Our exit from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine is reshaping global food systems and public attitudes to food. These challenging times also present a real opportunity to reshape food systems.

I have two main research interests in the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences. I have two main research interests: one is diet, primarily focused on food purchasing behaviour, dietary intake and dietary policies, and second, testing interventions for the treatment of obesity - whether in the population-level, and second, testing interventions for the treatment of obesity in routine care settings.

Increasingly my research has become more applied and focused on using science to shape policy and practice – whether in the food industry, the NHS or government. I’ve sought to make the FSA a key partner or Chair of various committees which have given me great insights into the evidence that is needed to make a difference. I was delighted to be offered the position as Chair of the Food Standards Agency last summer. It is a tremendous privilege to lead an organisation which is doing so much to protect public health and uphold the high food standards we enjoy in the UK. It is certainly something I would have predicted when I left university.

What skills do you bring to your current role from your previous career as a leading academic?

As Chair of the Food Standards Agency (FSA), I have been fortunate to be involved in a range of activities that I had not anticipated. This includes my role as a member of various committees which have given me great insights into the work of FSA and the responsibilities of food policies and public attitudes to food. These are critical moments for the FSA.

We are at an extraordinary moment for food policy. Our exit from the EU, the COVID-19 pandemic and now the war in Ukraine is reshaping global food systems and public attitudes to food. These challenging times also present a real opportunity to reshape food systems.
Ms Heather Kelman
New Chair of Food Standards Scotland (FSS)

Tell us about your career path from dietitian to FSS Chair. I graduated as a Dietitian from Robert Gordon’s Institute of Technology in 1981 and have worked in NHS trusts in Scotland and in research in Australia. In addition to being given the opportunity to form a new dietetic department providing a public-facing service, I was delighted to be given the opportunity to form a new dietetic department providing a public-facing service, and I was delighted to be given the opportunity to form a new dietetic department providing a public-facing service.

In this role I became a key member of the health promotion team and was part of the team responsible for the development of the national health promotion strategy. In this role I was also responsible for the development of the national health promotion strategy.

I then moved into the public health arena, where I was a key member of the team responsible for the development of the National Public Health Strategy. I was also responsible for the development of the National Public Health Strategy.

In 2014 I was appointed as the Director of the National Centre for Diet and Health in Scotland. In this role I was responsible for the development and delivery of the National Centre for Diet and Health in Scotland. In this role I was also responsible for the development and delivery of the National Centre for Diet and Health in Scotland.

My first day of retirement was also my first day of retirement. I retired from the NHS in 2015 and moved to academia, where I became a Senior Lecturer in Dietetics and a Researcher in the School of Public Health at the University of Aberdeen. In this role I was responsible for the development of the School of Public Health and the delivery of the MSc in Dietetics.

What role will nutrition science play in the work of FSS? FSS was established in 2005 to protect the health and wellbeing of consumers. We have a unique role in government, working independently of Ministers and industry, to provide advice which is impartial, and based on robust science and data. Our mission is “To be Scotland’s leading authority on food safety, standards and healthy eating; using data and evidence to provide assurance and advice that inspires consumer confidence and improves public health; ensuring that nutritional science is core to the work we do.”

The Nutrition team at FSS is committed to continuing to gather data on food purchasing and food intake which provides data and information used by many nutritional scientists and policy advisers.

The inclusion of Intake 24 in the Scottish Health Survey should improve the accuracy of population level detailed dietary data.

In order to our routine data gathering and reporting, FSS has identified funding for research and development in the process and development of the research plan to underpin the delivery of our strategy “Healthy, Safe, Sustainable: Driving Scotland’s Food Future”. The plan will be available later this year and outlines how working in partnership to generate evidence and data is essential to meet our aims. This will include additional work in the field of diet and health, foodborne illness, identifying risks to the food chain and understanding and attitudes and behaviours of consumers. In partnership with FSA, FSS is now jointly responsible for the risk analysis associated with the association of the production of new food or animal feed products. The introduction of new foods, will be accompanied by these health assessments. FSS will need the data and evidence to test these claims and ensure all labelling complies with legislation.

It can be seen that the need for nutritional science permeates almost every aspect of the work of FSS and we aim to build our relationships with the academic institutions and individuals that work within our field of interest.

What will be your priorities over your first term in office? As I sit here I have only been in post for seven weeks, and my initial priority was to meet the high number of partners and stakeholders that are essential to FSS fulfilling our purpose and also to fully understand how FSS delivers its statutory functions and objectives. In addition, I had an immediate priority to commence the renewal process for new Board Members to replace myself and the three very experienced and highly valued Board Members that are filling the place at the end of March 2023. It is so important that I find equally enthusiastic, well informed and committed people to join the Board. If any reader think this could be them, you can register your interest by scanning the QR code below.

Looking beyond these immediate actions, my priority for the rest of my time in office is very clearly to focus on delivering our aims as outlined in the FSS Strategy for 2021-2026. This includes: opening the opportunity for office and public dialogue with all players to ensure the food landscape of the future is one that is better aligned with health, safety and sustainability. FSS shall take the opportunity from this first term of office and be the ever increasing volume of work arising from the UK exit from the European Union will prioritise our ambition for the future and look forward to working with all stakeholders that are essential to us from our ambitions for the future.

How do you plan to work with the academic community in Scotland? I met with Professor Julie Fitzpatrick, Chief Scientific Advisor for Scotland short while after my appointment and we have discussed how we can support collaboration between scientists in Scotland and I look forward to working with her over the years to come.

I also have ambitions to visit many of the food related institutes or academic bodies in Scotland along with Professor David Glynn, FSS’s Chief Scientific Advisor, to learn more about the work being undertaken within the academic community and to explore opportunities for collaboration and joint working. In addition, I will be attending the Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland’s Annual Forum this year to talk about the FSS Strategy.

Later this year the FSS Research Plan shall be presented to and discussed at our Board. The publication and communication of this plan shall hopefully foster opportunities for further dialogue between FSS and the academic community in Scotland.

The food landscape is very complex and changing. What do you think you can do differently in future? I view this as a challenge across the entire food chain from farm or store fork, each sector has a need to consider what they can do to improve health of the population and the planet.

The food environment in Scotland must change. It is easy to blame individual choice and goodness. But it is also clear that people and environments may be papers to clear, or correspondence to reply to. I may meet with members of the FSS Board, or the National Food Industry and retail businesses to make profit, it is impossible to change the consumption of discretionary high fat, high sugar, high salt, low fibre foods in Scotland.

I would also like to see organisations/ businesses or individuals responsible for the food environment, the food environment, responsible for the food environment, responsible for the food environment.

Everyone should have access to quality food, and should make a big difference to a person’s diet, especially as so many calories are now consumed outwith our homes.

For individuals I would like to simplify the diet advice available. We do not have to move to the perfect food intake overnight. Keep a note of what you eat over a day or week and find 5 things you would like to change and concentrate on achieving those. The difficulty about giving dietary advice is that the best change is best made to the entire population as a whole person. Advising someone not to eat a particular product will only work if that food is unacceptable to that person. If I was allowed to choose for everyone I would ensure that we all increase our vegetable, fruit and fibre intake.

What does a typical day in your role look like? I am semi-retired and don’t think I have such a thing as a typical day. But normally I will start by opening my emails and checking to see if there is anything urgent requiring my attention. I then move to check my calendar for the rest of the forthcoming couple of weeks and my task list and from this list of all this to form a plan for the next week. For example, I may need media coverage for the day and consider if there is anything there of concern.

The wonderful thing about this role is that no two days are alike, and that I am learning so much every day. The to-do list may include meetings with politicians, government officials, partner agencies such as Public Health Scotland and FSA or consumer organisations, retailers and the food sector – retail, manufacturing, regulation, science, and the third sector are just some examples – and may be papers to clear, or correspondence to reply to. I may meet with members of the FSS Board, or the National Food Industry and retail businesses to make profit, it is impossible to change the consumption of discretionary high fat, high sugar, high salt, low fibre foods in Scotland.

I would like to see organisations/ businesses or individuals responsible for the food environment, the food environment, responsible for the food environment, responsible for the food environment.

I think I have a role to play in changing the food landscape of the future, and I think I have a role to play in changing the food landscape of the future.

INTERVIEWS WITH...
Importance of Nutrition in Japan and the World

Professor Hisanori Kato, The University of Tokyo, Japan
and Professor Kiyotaka Nakagawa, Tohoku University, Japan

In recent years, countries worldwide have seen growing research interest in the relationship between nutrition and health. Known for its incredible life expectancy, Japan has long been a role model for its progressive approach to nutritional science, including its practical application and education. Nevertheless, there are many issues that Japan must face due to its status as an advanced nation with an ageing population. These include the provision of nutritious meals for senior citizens, the increase in lifestyle-related diseases, the challenges in ensuring the appropriate use of functional foods and supplements, undernutrition, overnutrition, unhealthy dietary habits of the younger population, increased emphasis on body weight among young women, and low birth-weight infants. From this perspective, society expects us to address and solve these problems through the advancement of nutritional science (Fig.1).

Japan Society of Nutrition and Food Science (JSNFS) and International Activities

This year marks the 75th year since the founding of the Japan Society of Nutrition and Food Science (JSNFS) in 1947 by experts to address the nutritional deficiencies in Japan at that time. As the 14th subcommittee of the Japanese Association of Medical Sciences, JSNFS has contributed to the progress in nutrition and food science research while maintaining a close relationship with the medical field. Today, with changes in the social environment, our research targets have been diversified and deepened to include overnutrition, lifestyle-related diseases, and an ageing society. We believe that the academic progress in these fields will make a significant contribution to the health and well-being of people around the world. Because of this, our Society has long placed a high value on international activities, many of which have been performed in cooperation with international bodies representing related fields, including the International Union of Nutritional Science (IUNS), the International Union of Food and Technologies (IUFoST), and the Federation of Asian Nutrition Societies (FANS).

22nd IUNS-ICN

The International Congress of Nutrition (ICN) is held by IUNS every four years, making it the world’s longest-running international congress in the field of nutritional science. 47 years have passed since the last ICN was held in Japan (10th ICN, and following the appointment of Japan as the host for the 22nd IUNS-ICN for fall 2021 (subsequently postponed to winter 2022), our Society, together with the Japanese Society of Nutrition and Dietetics, formed the 22nd International Congress of Nutrition Organising Committee in 2016 to prepare for the upcoming congress. The organising committee has selected as its main theme “The Power of Nutrition: For the Smiles of 10 Billion People.”

The event will include presentations and discussions of significant research findings in the field of nutritional science, with topics covering:
- the advances in nutrition research
- nutrients and nutritional assessment
- nutrition through life course
- nutrition and management of diseases

In addition, we invited the recipients of the Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine to deliver the keynote address. Hosting the 22nd IUNS-ICN in Japan provides an opportunity to bring together leading researchers from around the world to facilitate the discussion and presentation of the latest research findings related to the importance of nutritional science and contribute to the development and application of nutritional sciences. We look forward to welcoming you at the 22nd IUNS-ICN in Tokyo from 6-11 December 2022.

International Engagement

As a Student Section, one of our goals is to improve our engagement with our international student members. I have been very fortunate to be working with Christina Choo, our International Student Representative (who is also a final year student from King’s College London). Together, we are creating a strategic plan to develop activities that cater for the needs of international students. Keep your eyes peeled as we should be able to share more about this in the coming months!

If you have any ideas on how best to engage with our international student members, please do let us know via email: studentsection@nutritionsociety.org

Career Support

Having a clear idea of our career path after graduating is difficult and often leaves us with more confusion than before. As Nutrition Society members, we are very fortunate to have the support from the NSTA to help us explore the many career paths and ascertain the skills, knowledge and experience needed to be competent nutritional professionals. This year, the Student Section continued to provide members with the opportunity to hear from nutritionists across various different professions through regular career events including Nutrition Futures. The Society now has a dedicated careers area on the website where members can access past career session recordings and get inspired to pursue a nutrition related career through the new ‘Day in the life of...’ case studies.

Access the Career Section here:

Nutrition Futures

Looking ahead, the Student Section is busy planning its annual Nutrition Futures. Hosted by Coventry University, the event will take place on 6-7 September 2022 and promises an array of opportunities for all students, graduates and prospective nutrition students to engage in the diverse and interactive activities across the many topics within nutrition.

Attendees will have the opportunity to:
- present their research through our oral communication sessions
- develop skills in public speaking and publication through workshops
- hear from leading experts across a range of disciplines
- learn how to create a job seeking strategy through our careers panel
- build new connections and through networking opportunities.

This is such an exciting meeting for all students, whether in the UK or overseas, and we look forward to meeting you at Coventry in September.

Join the Student Section

Despite the 'highs' of these past few months, the academic year is now coming to an end, so we will have to say goodbye to Section members who are graduating and moving on to the next exciting chapter of their nutrition careers. That means we have some vacancies for student members to fill. If you are interested in joining the Student Section, please could you contact myself, Kiu Sum at studentsection@nutritionsociety.org

We are also looking for students to become University Ambassadors for their university. If any student members would like to learn more about the Ambassador programme, please visit the website or contact us directly at studentsection@nutritionsociety.org.

We would be very happy to hear any feedback or ideas.
The Nutrition Society Themes

It is with great pleasure that I take on the role as the Society’s Theme Lead for Nutrition in the Treatment, Management and Prevention of Disease. I would like to thank my predecessor, Professor Ailsa Welch, for all her hard work and dedication to this role, and the Public Health Nutrition Theme which she formerly led, over the past 11 years. I am looking forward to serving in this role and supporting the shaping of this Theme with you all over the coming years.

I am delighted to see that our Theme now represents 1,263 members from across the globe and various career stages. Dr Oonagh Markey, Loughborough University, and Dr Christian Reynalds, City University, London, will have opportunities to facilitate conferences and ‘hot topics’/Special Interest Groups (SIGs) related to our Theme, you can find out more about the current SIGs overseas. Members aligned to this Theme are encouraged to reach out if they would like to propose a SIG that considers foods and nutrients as risk factors for diseases, nutritional strategies for prevention, or nutrition in the management and treatment of clinical conditions. To ensure that we are meeting the needs of the next generation of nutritionists, I would also like to invite members in the early stages of their career to get in touch with us on how they might like to contribute to the Theme or feel more supported in their career development.

In the coming years, I would like to support the advancement of nutritional science. Acknowledging that nutrition scientists will often undertake work within and across multiple disciplines, the four Themes of Nutrition and optimum life course, Food systems, Nutrition in the treatment, management and prevention of disease and Novel nutrition research methodologies cut across all research themes. To champion these networks and ensure effective representation across all the disciplines, the new structure encourages interdisciplinary working of researchers across scales from molecular to public health, policy, and nutrition research methodologies.

Members can express their ‘Theme’ of interest when they join the Society or are able to update this in their members’ area. Each Theme is led by a Theme Lead, who represents the interests of, and liaises with Society members through their Member-Connect Forum.

Hear from your current Theme Lead about the recent developments in their field and the plans they have for their theme:

Food Systems

Dr Christian Reynolds, City University, London

I am time of rapid change and large challenges for food systems. The continuing cost of living crisis, the war in Ukraine (resulting in grain and fertiliser supply chain disruptions), and the return to new normal post Brexit and COVID-19 have all shocked the food system. As nutritionists and food system operators we are working at mitigating the fallout of these events. However, these events are just the tip of the iceberg, many possible structural food system transformations are now about to begin.

In 2020 the National Food Strategy to tackle obesity and create healthy food systems was published, and on 13 June 2022 the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs’ (DEFRA) published a response to the first independent review of the UK’s food system in 75 years. Many had hoped that this white paper would be bold in vision and provide far sighted support for the food system reform necessary to achieve the UK’s current net zero and nature positive commitments, tackle obesity and reduce inequalities. However, the white paper was described as ‘precarious’ and ‘unsatisfactory’.

Without the need for supplementation or food fortification. However, it remains to be seen whether the regulators and the general public will accept gene edited foods when genetically modified foods remain essentially rejected by both.

Other equally intriguing research suggests that the nutrient composition of foods, while highly diverse, follows very specific mathematical rules determined by the inherent biological properties of the underlying metabolic networks (Menichetti and Barabasi Nature Foods (2022) 3, 375–382). As such, the authors of this work suggest the mathematical rules they uncovered could be used to define normal variability in nutrient content for a particular food type and also to impute data missing from food composition databases.

With such a diverse range of new and emerging technologies available, the opportunity for you to set up SIGs to help develop and realise the true potential of this field, seems ideal and I encourage you to consider applying to set up SIGs for the approaches you want to champion.

Continued over...
New Special Interest Groups (SIGs) launched:

In addition to the two established SIGs overleaf, the Society is delighted to announce that two new SIGs have been launched in

1) Diet and Health of Ethnic Minority Groups
2) Global School Health and Nutrition

Scan to find out more:

Reference:

Since starting research in workplace diet and health I became aware of some challenges to developing research in this area. Firstly, there are many great researchers and stakeholders sharing an interest in this area and secondly, nutrition and diet in the workplace is an emerging area and key organisation within nutrition and dietetics (British Dietetic Association, Association for Nutrition and British Nutrition Foundation) are actively involved in workplace diet and health. However, there was no central hub or conference themes in the UK to support collaboration and to bring interested stakeholders and researchers together.

When I heard about the SIG initiative – I immediately jumped at the chance to apply with the aim of setting up a network of researchers and stakeholders. I had discussions with the Theme Lead Dr Wendy Hall – about how the SIG aligned to Nutrition and Optimum Life Course, I also reached out to contacts at BDA and other researchers working in the area to help develop the groups remit. The application process was straightforward, and interest in membership has received a positive response.
Update from the Irish Section

Dr Anne Nugent, Secretary

Since the last edition of the Gazette, the Irish Section has been delighted to return to two in-person meetings. In February 2022, the 31st Annual Irish Section Postgraduate Meeting was hosted by Ulster University, with 88 delegates attending. Oral presentations were delivered by 39 postgraduate students. The standard of presentations was excellent and it was a pleasure to see so many questions for the speakers from fellow students. A further highlight of the meeting was the excellent presentations from eight guest speakers who provided insight to the opportunities after PhD life and a range of career and professional advice to those present.

With the removal of all COVID-19 related restrictions, it is anticipated to grow the number of Nutrition Society undergraduate events aimed at increasing awareness of the benefits of becoming a Society member. Many thanks to those who have hosted such events during the academic year 2021/22. Members are also encouraged to engage with Nutrition Society ambassadors within their university who can provide guidance and advice on all Society activities.

The Irish Section Conference took place in June at University College Cork. Dr. Alice Lucey and team did a great job in putting together a very exciting programme. I was delighted to attend and hear so many guest speakers discussing how we can learn from past perspectives of the impact of nutrition science to human health to channel future directions. My thanks to all the organisers and local helpers for organising such a successful event.

Finally, we held our Annual Section Meeting during the Irish Section Conference on 16 June. Thank you for the members who attended and to those who participated in the voting for new student representative and ordinary member roles. I would like to sincerely thank Lauren Devine for all of her work as student representative of the Irish Section Committee. She has been a pleasure to work with and I appreciated the great enthusiasm she brought to the role. The Irish Section look forward to welcoming a new student and ordinary member to the committee this Summer.

Update from the Scottish Section

Dr Alexandra Mavroedi, Secretary

The 2022 Spring Conference took place as a hybrid event on 4-5 April 2022 at the Royal Society of Edinburgh (in person) and online. Over 100 delegates (in person and online) came together to discuss the topic “Nutrition, immune function and infectious disease.” The program was very well received by the audience and the AGM took place on last day of the conference.

As of Spring 2022, the Committee membership has been renewed with newly elected members: Professor Alexander Johnstone, University of Aberdeen, Dr Suzanne Zaremba, University of Dundee, Daniel Crabtree, University of the Highlands and Islands; re-elected members: Dr Alexandra Mavroedi, University of Strathclyde; Mr James Dick, University of Stirling; Dr Janet Kyle, University of Aberdeen; co-opted members: Dr James Dorling, University of Glasgow, Dr Nida Fazal, University of St Andrews; Ms Catriona Thomson, University of Glasgow, and Mr Matevz Arcon, University of Aberdeen, continue with their Committee membership for another year. We said goodbye to three long-standing members (Dr Stuart Gray, University of Glasgow Dr Jo Cecil, University of St Andrews and Dr Derek Ball, University of Aberdeen) who have finished their terms and are stepping down, we are ever so grateful for their invaluable contributions to this committee over the years. Dr Alexandra Mavroedi is now the Secretary of the Committee.

In parallel with all members of the Society, the Scottish Section has been challenged by the continued effects of the pandemic. In 2022, we primarily met online with the AGM taking place as a hybrid meeting in April 2022. As restrictions have eased, we plan to resume in-person events from Autumn 2022. The Committee is now busy planning the 2023 meeting, to be held at Glasgow on 28-29 March 2024, on the theme of ‘Nutrition, immune function and infectious disease’.

As always, we are actively looking to engage with our membership and hope to increase our Society Ambassadors in Scottish universities. If you would like to become a Nutrition Society ambassador, please take a look at the Ambassador Pack by scanning this QR code.

H}aving worked on human clinical trials for the past seven years, I can honestly say no two days are the same. Coping with various states of restrictions during a global pandemic for the past two years has made that statement even truer!

In March 2020, a day in the life of a researcher working on clinical trials looked much the same as a day in the life of anyone else; stuck at home, looking after plants and making banana bread. The onset of the pandemic coincided with the beginning of the analysis phase from the clinical trial I had run during my PhD, investigating the impact of almonds on the gut microbiota and gut health. I was lucky enough to have completed recruitment the previous August, but had many samples to analyse and this was put on hold. When restrictions began to ease in the Summer of 2020, I was eager to get back into the lab. However, returning to the lab during this stage of the pandemic had many challenges. The college advised only to return to the building if entirely necessary, which for me, couldn’t be truer as the clock was ticking on my funding. The once busy and lively department was now deserted. Some days I felt like I was the only person there. I was being trained remotely on equipment I was only slightly familiar with, often via FaceTime on my phone while poking at buttons on a piece of equipment and praying I would eventually hit the right one! It was a massive challenge, but supervisors and colleagues at King’s were always willing to help from afar.

Following the writing up phase that took me through the winter 2021 lockdowns, I completed my doctoral studies in Summer 2021. Shortly after this, I was lucky enough to begin working on another clinical trial in the Nutrition Department at King’s, this time investigating the impact of commercially relevant fats on post-prandial lipaemia and other cardiovascular outcomes. Working on this study was a whole new experience. While running the previous study, participant visits typically lasted 1-2 hours, during which time we collected samples, anthropometric measurements and asked participants to complete questionnaires. My new role involved running post-prandial study visits – often 12 hours during which participants arrived in the morning and were provided with meals containing specific fats. We then collected blood from them via a cannula, at specific time points over a 9-hour period. Initially, I found this new type of study day exhausting but quickly got used to it and thoroughly enjoyed the interaction with participants throughout the day. As they were required to remain in the unit for the entire duration of the study day, it was often easier to get to know them and explain our research to them in more detail, which is a part of my job that I love.

Running this type of trial in Summer of 2021 while the pandemic was still lurking in the background had new challenges. Participants often had to cancel visits due to contracting COVID-19, so we had to become very flexible with our own time and organisation skills. Maintaining participant and staff safety was at the forefront. Recruitment was difficult, as the public seemed more wary of travelling to additional locations that weren’t essential. However, when we did manage to recruit a participant, they were often delighted to take part once they arrived, having been locked down at home for so long.

Since beginning a new role within the department in January 2022, a day in my life has changed once again. I am now in the late stages of organising an exciting new trial, investigating the impact of diet on immune health. My days are typically desk-based, focusing on protocol design, applying for ethical approval, designing study documents, updating collaborators and ordering supplies and consumables for the start of the study in September – when a day in my life will change once again! Although most restrictions have now eased, the memories of the pandemic remain and so, in a new challenge, I have been tasked with putting into place a contingency plan for how we might continue the study should another lockdown occur. Options include home blood and stool collections and methods of running the study without face-to-face interaction. While we all hope this will not happen, the extra level of preparation is perhaps part of our “new normal” in the running of clinical trials.
The classical reductionist approach to nutrition research of focusing on individual food components has provided immense insight into nutrient requirements and the potential health-promoting bioactivities of non-nutrient components of food. This type of information is routinely mapped to food composition databases to assess the nutritional adequacy of diets. However, such approaches do not necessarily capture the vital contribution of food structure on human health. There is, for example, great concern around potential adverse health effects of ultra-processed foods but not all food processing is automatically bad for health as some may enhance the bioavailability of key food components. With changing patterns of food consumption to achieve environmental sustainability and a constant flow of new food products on the market, the need to better understand the role of food structure and processing on human health has perhaps never been greater. The Nutrition Society’s Winter Conference will consider current understanding and knowledge gaps around the role of whole foods and food processing on health, focusing on primary prevention and management of chronic diseases as well as implications for food-based dietary guidelines.

Further details will be available on the conference section of the website. Registration and abstract submission will open shortly.

Conferences

**Nutrition Futures 2022**
A diverse and interactive experience for all nutrition science students, graduates and prospective students.
6-7 September 2022

**22nd IUNS-ICN 2022**
The Power of Nutrition: for the smiles of 10 billion people
Tokyo, Japan
6-11 December 2022

**Winter Conference 22/23**
Food architecture and health
The Royal Society, London
24-25 January 2023

**Nutrition Society Training Academy (NSTA)**
Continue your professional development around your busy schedule: Pre-recorded versions of recent NSTA webinars are available to listen to at a variety of different times on the website.
www.nutritionsociety.org/training-academy

CPD endorsement by the Association for Nutrition has been applied for, for ALL Nutrition Society Events.