

IADSA CONNECT

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Social networking: Afepadi harnesses digital potential

HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS EXPAND &
DOWNSCHEDULE PROJECT SOUTH AFRICA

FIVE THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT
THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE

#07

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SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS: HOW SHARED GOALS ARE INSPIRING COLLABORATION IN SINGAPORE

Health Supplements Industry Association Singapore (HSIAS) has developed a uniquely close working relationship with the Singaporean government. HSIAS President Daniel Quek told IADSA Connect how this delivers benefits to both the supplement sector and consumers.

Singapore is noted for its stability and consistency, which makes it a highly attractive Asian base for many businesses. This steadiness also helps to explain the strong and constructive rapport between Singapore's health supplement sector and its government – especially the Health Sciences Authority (HSA), which regulates Singapore's health supplement category. It is a non-adversarial relationship built on mutual trust and a commitment to common goals – namely the protection of consumers and the promotion of trade.

"HSA has been very supportive," says Daniel Quek, President of Health Supplements Industry Association Singapore (HSIAS). "Levels of trust have continued to increase, and over time, we've seen more consultation and collaboration between HSA and HSIAS. We've shown that we can be trusted, and that we have a view on how regulations can benefit consumers and help HSA to do its job of keeping the population safe."

This close bond has its origins at the inception of HSIAS. Nineteen years ago, Dr. Clarence Tan, the incumbent CEO of HSA, approached Lam Pin Woon, who was at the time CEO of Cerebos Pacific Limited's Southeast Asian business – then a Singapore stock exchange listed supplement supplier but now a subsidiary of Suntory Beverage & Food Asia.

With Singapore's supplement market growing quickly, Tan asked Pin Woon to work with other like-minded companies and set up a trade association so that HSA and other government departments had a single point of contact for the sector. Quek still has a copy of the letter that started it all, dated July 2001, in which Pin Woon writes that he agrees to Tan's request to spearhead the creation of an industry association that will work closely with HSA towards the aim of protecting consumers.

Nearly two decades on, HSIAS has 40 members and this collaborative spirit remains as strong as it ever was. HSA and HSIAS now meet several times a year at both senior and working group levels, and HSA regularly consults with HSIAS on issues relating to the regulation of supplements. They also work together to jointly and regularly communicate the key message to consumers that they should buy supplements only from reputable sources.

At present, there are ongoing discussions regarding the classification of 'grey area' products, including certain ingredients historically considered as foods in Singapore but which today are increasingly being sold as supplements in tablet or capsule form. Such ingredients typically fall under the jurisdiction of the Singapore Food Agency, so this trend has raised questions about how they should be regulated when they are used as supplements.



There is also a growing trend in Singapore for health supplements to be sold in non-traditional formats, such as confectionery. These developments, and others, have created regulatory quandaries for HSA, which it hopes HSIAS can help to resolve.

Quek says that he and his colleagues at HSIAS have always been impressed by the seriousness of HSA staff. Since 2001, there have been four CEOs at the authority and each time the new holder of the position has made the effort to understand the key issues for the health supplement sector in Singapore. “They read the files to get up to date,” he says. “They value continuity and that’s a great thing.”

Going forward, HSIAS is excited about the prospect of harmonisation in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which is targeting regional economic integration among the 10 ASEAN member states. This is set to create new regional trade opportunities for Singapore’s supplement companies. As a nation of fewer than six million people, Singapore is heavily reliant on sales overseas for its continued economic growth and prosperity.

In this area, HSIAS works closely with another government agency, Enterprise Singapore (ESG), an arm of Singapore’s Ministry of Trade & Industry, which is tasked with building capacity and creating export and trade opportunities for Singaporean companies.

HSIAS, working in collaboration with ESG and HSA, has taken a leading role in the harmonisation process through the ASEAN Alliance of Health Supplement Associations (AAHSA), an alliance of seven national supplement associations in ASEAN.

ESG also provides support to HSIAS members domestically. During the COVID-19 pandemic, it agreed to categorise the supplement supply chain as essential so that HSIAS members could continue operating during the wider lockdown.

Meanwhile, the special relationship between HSIAS and HSA continues to develop and deepen. Officials have started to speak about the idea of ‘co-regulation’, with government and industry sharing responsibility for developing better legislation to protect consumer health. It’s early days, but Quek says: “It shows that we’ve come a long way. It’s a big idea for both HSA and HSIAS, but an exciting one with a lot of promise.”



IADSA 100 MINUTES

FIVE THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE

This article is based on a presentation given during the IADSA 100 Minutes online annual members' meeting on 12 June 2020 by Manfred Eggersdorfer PhD, Professor for Healthy Ageing, University Medical Center, Groningen, Netherlands. It explores some of the key developments on the horizon in the field of nutrition science.

Nutrition science remains a relatively young discipline: the first vitamin was characterised only as recently as 1912. Progress since means that we now know more than ever before about the close relationship between the food we consume and the health of the human body. However, there is still much to be achieved. For example, there remains a reluctance in some quarters to trust in nutritional insights. This makes it harder to communicate new learnings, which in turn risks undermining the progress we have made. Nevertheless, at the same time, wellbeing remains a key priority for governments and consumers worldwide. With this in mind, let us take a look at what the future holds for nutrition science.

1. NUTRITION RESEARCHERS WILL ADOPT A MORE HOLISTIC APPROACH

We know that vitamins and minerals are required in specific quantities to catalyse a range of important reactions in the human body. However, understanding is now also increasing of the complex inter-dependency that exists between them. In fact, if just one of the essential nutrients is not available in the required concentration, there can be a broader detrimental impact on health and performance. According to Dariush Mozaffarian, Professor of Nutrition at Tufts University in Boston, this means that research focusing on a single nutrient is no longer adequate. Instead, a more holistic approach is required. If this idea is adopted more widely, it could have major implications for how human studies are conducted in the future.

2. NUTRITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS WILL TAKE ACCOUNT OF LONG-TERM HEALTH

Life expectancy is rising in most parts of the world. Singaporean and Swiss nationals, for example, can now look forward to living until they are 84. However, this is only part of the story. On average, the final nine to ten years of their long lives will be impacted by ill health. This is a pattern that is replicated all over the world – and highlights the importance of optimal nutritional status. Take Vitamin E. The RDA in the US is 15mg, while in Europe it is 11mg for women and 13mg for men. However, Simin Meydani, Professor at Tufts University, has demonstrated in human studies in elderly subjects that a higher dose of vitamin E reduces the risk of respiratory tract infections by up to 37%. As a result, she and her team recommend an increase in the intake of vitamin E for elderly people. This example shows how taking new science into account – and updating nutritional recommendation accordingly – could help to promote long-term wellbeing and make those final years of life more enjoyable.

3. NUTRITION WILL BE RECOGNIZED AS A RISK REDUCTION FACTOR FOR NCDs

Around 70% of diseases are non-communicable diseases (NCDs) – many of them preventable. According to the Global Burden of Disease Report, the onset of NCDs begins in our 40s and evidence is growing that optimal nutrition earlier in life could be critical to prevention. Dementia is a case in point. About 50 million people worldwide live with dementia, a figure expected to reach 135 million by 2050. A paper by M. Hasan Mohajeri and colleagues indicates that multi-vitamins and minerals from foods or supplements are associated with a lower risk of cognitive decline. This is an important finding, since there are currently no drugs to treat or cure dementia-related diseases such as Alzheimer's. It strengthens the case, therefore, for a greater focus on the role of nutrition in addressing ageing.

4. INTEREST WILL INTENSIFY IN THE ROLE OF MICRONUTRIENTS IN IMMUNE HEALTH

Historically, there has been a lack of public discussion around nutritional strategies to support the immune system. This is surprising, since the important role nutrition plays in immune function is well established. There is a wealth of mechanistic and clinical data showing that a wide range of vitamins and trace elements support the immune system – and yet inadequate intake and status of these nutrients remains widespread. We now understand more about how optimal nutritional status is important for a well-functioning immune system. As such, and in the wake of COVID-19, it makes sense that this should form part of a comprehensive package of measures to improve our resistance.



5. THE FUTURE IS OPTIMAL NUTRITION 2.0

On the whole, nutrient intake recommendations address the needs of the average population, with some variations for age, gender and specific circumstances such as pregnancy. However, there are many other variables that can determine nutrient requirements for an individual, including height, weight, physical activity levels and genetics. The ability to personalise a diet to meet individual needs will take us beyond today's concept of optimal nutrition into new territory where everybody has a diet tailored to their needs. You might even call it Optimal Nutrition 2.0.

IN CONCLUSION

For the first half of the 20th century, researchers focused on the discovery, isolation and synthesis of essential micronutrients and their role in deficiency diseases. This paved the way for nutrient-focused approaches to dietary research, guidelines and policy to address malnutrition, which in turn was extended to address the rise in diet-related non-communicable diseases by focusing on total fat, saturated fat and sugar rather than overall diet quality. Recent advances in nutrition science have explained the many effects of diet on NCDs. In light of this, it has become clear that nutrition policy should follow the latest research findings and prioritize food-based dietary targets, while communicating trusted science to stimulate changes in diets to fit modern lifestyles.

SOCIAL NETWORKING: AFEPADI HARNESSES DIGITAL POTENTIAL

La Asociación de las Empresas de Dietéticos y Complementos Alimenticios (Afepadi) is Spain's food supplement sector organisation and a member of IADSA. In this article, Connect explores how social media is playing a key role in Afepadi's communication outreach strategy.

Afepadi was established in 1943 to provide representation for Spanish businesses involved in the marketing of specialist foods for nutritional needs and medicinal plants. Over the decades, its focus has evolved. Today, Afepadi's most significant area of activity is the food supplement sector, alongside slimming foods and sports nutrition products.

With 94 members – comprised of businesses of all sizes – Afepadi's role in Spain's supplement category is as important as it has ever been during its 77-year history. The domestic market has been growing for the past 15 years, and the association is using its influence to shape positive opinion among both stakeholders and consumers.

To achieve this, Afepadi is maximising opportunities for external communications. Social media is particularly important to this approach. Afepadi has a strong presence on [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) and [Instagram](#) and posts regularly to engage with its followers.

"Our commitment to regular communications stems from the fact that if we did not communicate what the supplement industry is, then others would take the opportunity to communicate what the supplement industry is not," says Camil Rodiño, General Secretary at Afepadi.

“It’s important to keep our members top-of-mind among regulators, the public and other stakeholders, and doing this requires consistent and frequent engagement. Social media platforms give us a simple and effective way to do this.”

These words underline how a key priority for Afepadi is to build and maintain a positive profile for the reputable supplement companies that make up its membership. It is a philosophy that was evident recently when AESAN, the Spanish government’s agency for food safety and nutrition, issued a warning to consumers about the sale of supplements that falsely claim to prevent, treat or cure COVID-19. Shortly afterwards, Afepadi issued its own statement affirming its support for AESAN’s announcement.

Afepadi has strong links with policymakers at national and European Union levels and works closely alongside other industry associations with shared goals. A key aim is to improve the movement of food supplements within the EU’s internal market.

Afepadi is also active in delivering training to members in a range of technical and regulatory areas. Depending on the topic, Afepadi sometimes invites relevant external parties to join these sessions. In June 2019, for example, the association held a training module on labelling, marketing and advertising for regulatory professionals. AESAN took part, underlining Afepadi’s enthusiasm for working closely with regulators.

“This approach enriches the content and enables us to establish and develop constructive relationships,” says Camil Rodiño. “In turn, it promotes our philosophy of encouraging collaborative work.”

During the coronavirus pandemic, he adds, Afepadi has moved training sessions online, ensuring it can continue to provide the resources the industry needs.

COVID-19 has made face-to-face interaction difficult, increasing reliance on digital communications. With its expertise and experience in social media, Afepadi has been able to adapt quickly and maintain the level communication required to continue its valuable advocacy of Spain’s supplement sector.



Camil Rodiño, General Secretary, Afepadi



HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS EXPAND & DOWNSCHEDULE PROJECT SOUTH AFRICA

JANET WELHAM, TECHNICAL ADVISER & TREASURER, HEALTH PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION



From June 2017, when the new Medicines and Related Substances Amendment Act, No 72 of 2008, came into force, all Complementary Medicines (CMs) including all Discipline Specific (DS) & Health Supplements (HS) fell within the definition of a medicine and the Allopathic Medicine framework, this included the Scheduling status of certain Health Supplement substances (not for free sale), some of the Health Supplement lists were incomplete or did not even exist and registration for all of these products was via the allopathic CTD registration process.

THE PROBLEM

This resulted in the following;

1. No new products have been launched since 2017
2. There are several challenges facing imports through Port Health
3. Very few products have been reviewed
4. No products have been registered
5. Gridlock situation exists
6. This situation is not only affecting South Africa but many of the surrounding SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES.

The HPA used scientific data as the base for each application, motivation and white paper submission. Each submission was reviewed using data obtained from several sources and supported information, documentation and scientific reviews obtained from IADSA, The World Health Organisation (WHO), The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), The Codex Alimentarius Commission, The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), The Food Standards Agency (FSA) in the United Kingdom (UK), The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), The Therapeutic Goods Association (TGA) of Australia and Health Canada.

PROJECT: HEALTH SUPPLEMENTS – EXPAND & DOWNSCHEDULE

With the help of the IADSA Grant, the HPA was able to address some of these issues through the adoption of the Health Supplement - expand and down-schedule project.

The project's core focus was to;

1. Review and expand on each of the Health Supplement (HS) Annexures (lists of substances) that had been published. There were several reasons for this including to ensure that:
 - a. As many Health Supplement substances were on the list as possible
 - b. The allowable upper levels were in line with international standards
 - c. Claims for each Health Supplement substance were expanded on and included
 - d. All cautions were appropriate and accurate
 - e. As many of these substances as possible were classified as schedule 0 substances (i.e. right to free sale)
2. To review the current schedule lists and apply for the down-scheduling of certain key Health Supplement (HS) & Discipline Specific (DS) Complementary Medicine substances.

A STEPPED APPROACH

The project was broken into several phases.

STEP 1 & 2

The HPA motivated for the inclusion of new substances, for increased allowable levels of substances and motivated for certain changes to the existing Health Supplement lists Annexure C-J. The HPA submitted separate submissions for each of the following Annexures;

1. Annexure C (probiotics) & Annexure D (prebiotics)
2. Annexure E (Minerals) & Annexure F (Vitamins)
3. Annexure G (Proteins and Amino Acids)
4. Annexure H (Animal Extracts, Products and Derivatives)
5. Annexure I (Fats, Oils and Fatty Acids)
6. Annexure J (Carotenoids)
7. Annexure K (Polyphenols (including bioflavonoids)
8. Annexure L (Aminosaccharides)

Each Annexure was dealt with separately with core focus on:

- a) Reviewing each substance that had been published to ensure that the upper safe levels were in line with international best practice, that all sources of substances were included, that all relevant claims were included and that all cautions and warnings were correctly documented.
- b) Motivating for the inclusion of new substances, with associated claims, acceptable upper safe levels and respective cautions and warnings.
- c) That the scheduling status was addressed where applicable.

STEP 3

The HPA developed separate submissions for the outstanding Annexures that had not been published, including saccharides, enzymes and other substances.

STEP 4

The HPA reviewed and evaluated the current Schedule lists and motivated for the down-scheduling of certain substances and other changes to the published parameters.

RESULTS TO DATE

The HPA is currently awaiting a meeting with the CEO of SAHPRA and is anticipating that much of the content of these submissions will be incorporated into the next annexure and schedule updates.

Having said this, the above submissions together with previous submissions have resulted in the following changes so far;

- Glucosamine is now seen as a Health Supplement and its schedule status has also moved from Schedule 3 down to Schedule 0 (free sale).
- Minerals & Vitamins
 - Vanadium has been included onto the Health Supplement list and the schedule 0 list (less than 182ug Selenium [S0])
 - Chromium health supplement upper levels have been moved from 50ug to 200ug and schedule status at these levels is Schedule 0 [S0]
 - Selenium health supplement upper levels have moved from 60ug to 200ug and schedule status at these levels is Schedule 0 [S0]
 - Vitamin D health supplement upper levels have moved from 400iu to 1000iu and schedule status at these levels is Schedule 0 [S0]
- The Amino Acids methionine has now been included into the Health Supplement list with upper levels of 210mg, new health supplement claims have been included and the Schedule level has been moved down to Schedule 0 [S0]
- N-Acetyl Cysteine (NAC), has now been included into the Health Supplement list with upper levels of 600mg, new health supplement claims have been included and the Schedule level has been moved down to Schedule 0 [S0]
- Silymarin Schedule level has moved down from schedule 3 [S3] to schedule 0 [S0]
- CBD has been classified as a Complementary Medicine [S0] with certain parameters
- 5HTP, has been included into the Health Supplement list with upper levels of 220mg, new Health Supplement claims have been included and the Schedule level have been moved down to Schedule 0 [S0]

The HPA continues to focus on ensuring South Africa achieves a workable system for Complementary Medicines (including Health Supplements) that is sustainable. Its focus is developing and implementing a framework that best serves Complementary Medicines, Foods and the Nutritional Supplement Industry.

The HPA wishes to thank IADSA as the funds enabled the HPA to adopt this dynamic project which hopefully will enable its Members to trade more freely in South Africa and surrounding areas.

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IADSA

International Alliance of Dietary/
Food Supplement Associations

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