

Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment Annual Report 2023

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Preface



Head and shoulders image of Professor David Harrison in front of a grey background wearing a white shirt with a blue and yellow striped tie.

The Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment (COC) evaluates chemicals for their potential to cause cancer in humans at the request of UK Government Departments and Agencies.

The membership of the Committee, agendas and minutes of meetings, and statements are all published on the internet ([Committee on Carcinogenicity of Chemicals in Food, Consumer Products and the Environment - GOV.UK](#)).

The primary objective of COC is to provide guidance and advice to help protect the public from chemicals that increase the risk of cancer. In order to do this, Members of the Committee work with the Secretariat and others to sift data, review literature, weigh evidence and thus provide advice to many different bodies. An important outcome is to maintain up to date guidance statements which help regulators, policy makers, industry and other stakeholders decide how

to manage risk. For some time, COC has wrestled with the concept that whether a chemical can cause cancer is not a simple binary decision, but rather risk is best understood as a sliding scale and is influenced by many other factors including age, sex, other exposures, intercurrent disease and so on. There are many new technologies which may help determine risk for individuals or different groups, and COC is keen to ensure that these new technologies are considered and adopted where appropriate in order to improve our accuracy of prediction. The Committee has consulted widely and hosted workshops, the endpoint of which will be a new guideline document, to be developed in 2024, that encourages evidence based on new technologies to be presented to the Committee along with more traditionally required data. All of this has required much reading, debate and reflection and I am grateful to Members, other experts and the Secretariat for their unstinting efforts. The report that follows is brief but captures the flavour of the work of COC over the past year.

Professor David Harrison

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