

COC Horizon Scanning 2021

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3.21 The COC undertakes horizon scanning exercises at regular intervals with the aim of identifying new and emerging issues which have potential to impact on public health.

3.22 At the end of discussion in 2021, it was agreed that the priority topics were:

- Maintain a watching brief on factors affecting cancer susceptibility including shift work, stress and other lifestyle factors and how that might affect assessment of chemicals and carcinogenicity.
- Consider an update to guidance on assessment of nanomaterials, possibly as a joint activity across COC, COM and COT.
- Gain awareness of the potential effects of antibiotics and antivirals on the microbiome.
- Consider a joint discussion with COM on thresholds for in vivo mutagens and whether there is new information subsequent to the 2010 COM opinion.
- Endocrine disruption and the link with carcinogenicity, acknowledging that endocrine disruption is also within the COT remit.
- Impact of chemicals on potential for metastasis or progression of cancer, in particular with respect to the tumour microenvironment.
- Communication of cancer risk and how COC should be involved with this, especially with the move away from a yes/no decision on whether a substance is a carcinogen, and ensuring consistency in describing risks, possibly starting with a landscape review of terminology across a number of Committees (FSA and UKHSA) and led by Lay Members.
- Ensuring appropriate considerations are made to acknowledging diversity in the population especially where there might be differences in risk between different groups.

3.23 The Committee continues to have a standing agenda item for each meeting on horizon scanning topics and to update the COC on upcoming topics for UK and international scientific advisory groups.