



PERSATUAN PEMAKANAN MALAYSIA (NUTRITION SOCIETY OF MALAYSIA)

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Registered Office

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16th NSM Council (2016-2018)

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Confederation of Scientific and
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POSITION STATEMENT

NSM's Collaboration with Corporate Companies - a professional strategic Public-Private Partnership

Preamble

As the sole nutrition professional organization in the country, the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM) is guided by a simple belief – the more people understand food and nutrition, the better they can care for their health and wellbeing. In line with that vision, NSM's main objectives are to promote and advance nutrition science, and to enable networking of nutritionists in the country and internationally. NSM also supports the Government's efforts in promoting healthy nutrition and active living in the community to combat nutrition-related disorders

In line with its objectives, the NSM has carried out a variety of activities for more than 30 years, including organising national and international conferences, conducting food and nutrition research, participating actively in the development of Government policies, action plans and guidelines, as well as implementing nutrition education programmes for the community.

Public-Private Partnership – a strategic approach

Officially registered by the Registrar of Societies in 1985, NSM is a not-for-profit professional organisation, like other scientific professional organisations. In the implementation of the various activities outlined, NSM adopts a multi-stakeholder approach, including working with the private sector. We believe that this approach has enabled us to garner the resources and expertise available in the public and private sectors to be more effective in implementing the activities.

Collaboration with corporate companies has enabled us to have access to technical expertise in research, which are also available in the private sector. Research is a key activity aimed at obtaining evidence-based data, which are still sorely needed in Malaysia to support the formulation of sound public health policies. Such collaborations have also enabled our activities and educational messages to be disseminated to a much wider segment of the population. To be effective in preventing nutrition-related disorders, it is imperative that nutrition promotion reaches all corners of the country. By working with corporate companies to publish educational materials, NSM can ensure that the information is unbiased and based primarily on the Malaysian Dietary Guidelines of the Ministry of Health. Such partnerships with corporate companies have provided unprecedented opportunities to enable NSM to embark on projects and activities that eventually benefit the scientific community and the public at large.

NSM adopts a professional and ethical approach towards Public-Private partnership

Collaboration with corporate companies is not an unethical means invented by NSM to achieve its objectives. Public-private partnership has been encouraged by various national and international organisations. The Ministry of Health (MOH) National Strategic Plan for Non-Communicable Disease (NSP-NCD) (2016-2025) calls for a multi-sectoral action which includes an all-government approach and partnership with relevant civil society and private sector entities. The National Plan of Action for Nutrition (2016-2025) of MOH has similarly called for collaboration with private companies/industries to address nutritional issues through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health has called on ministries of health to form partnerships with key agencies and public and private stakeholders.

NSM is mindful that the professional standards of the organisation need to be maintained, in our collaborative activities with corporate companies. Whether this is for research projects or public nutrition promotion programmes, the NSM has maintained a clear and transparent approach that has been in place for decades. Each project proposal is first carefully scrutinised by the NSM nine Council Members. Only upon confirmation that the project is sound and benefits the scientific community and the public at large does the Council agree to implement it. All funds received are for the sole purpose of implementation of the planned activities, including third party expenses and payment for services (including, but not limited to, vendors and suppliers' services, event and logistics fees and secretariat fees). All income and expenditure are properly documented and available for scrutiny by auditors and members of NSM during its annual general meetings.

Funding received for research projects or nutrition promotion purposes are on an "unconditional" basis, ie the collaborating corporate companies shall not influence the findings or publications. For a research project, the NSM Council establishes a research committee with members from appropriate backgrounds. Recognising that there are expertise in the private sector that can be tapped into, corporate partner scientists may participate in the research project. The research committee is responsible to oversee the whole process of conducting the research. All members of the research project must be responsible for the findings and conclusions. In line with international academic publishing standards, all manuscripts are subject to scrutiny by peer reviewers assigned by the journal. So as to be transparent, the sponsors are acknowledged in a disclosure statement in the publication, which is another standard procedure in journal publishing. The process of conducting and publishing the study is strictly transparent and its limitations are acknowledged. NSM's strict ethical standards, as well as its internal structures provides the necessary checks and balances that prevent the research from being manipulated by corporate partners. Other researchers and readers who disagree with the conclusions of NSM's research can follow due process in writing to the journal's editors to critique the findings.

For community nutrition promotion projects, the NSM Council establishes an expert committee to oversee the implementation of the projects and report to the Council. The expert committee is responsible for the development of all the educational materials and activities. All educational content is based primarily on the Malaysian Dietary Guidelines. The corporate partner does not participate in the development of the materials and there is no mention of specific brands. There is also a clear disclaimer that the NSM does not endorse any brands. To give due acknowledgement and in order to be transparent, the respective corporation is allocated an advertisement/advertorial page. These acknowledgements of corporate partners in educational materials do not compromise NSM's professional standards.

The NSM has demonstrated that for decades, the combined resources made available through such strategic partnerships have enabled us to bring about benefits to the scientific community and the public at large without compromising our professional standards. Unbiased individuals will be able to examine objectively the output from these activities in referred journals and on our website (www.nutriweb.org.my). Our numerous contributions through the nine Council members and other members who are professors and senior lecturers in the top universities in the country are testimonies to our professional standing. NSM's achievements can be judged based on its track record of more than 30 years.

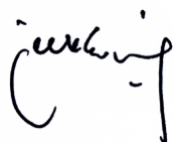
NSM continues to champion nutrition in the country

The government has recognised that nutrition must be part and parcel of the national development plan. The National Plan of Action for Nutrition (NPAN) of Malaysia has called for incorporation of nutrition objectives, considerations and components into national development policies and action plans in the relevant ministries and agencies. NSM, the only professional nutrition organisation in the country, has contributed to the development of this Plan and is expected to contribute to its implementation. NSM must be resilient and visionary to be able to contribute effectively to the national agenda of promoting optimal nutritional well-being of Malaysians.

Recognising this, the 16th Council of the Nutrition Society of Malaysia unanimously declare we will remain steadfast in continuing our mission of uplifting the status of nutrition science in the country and contribute to alleviation of nutrition problems affecting the population. We will strive to achieve our objectives through strategic partnership with all like-minded appropriate stakeholders: all relevant government agencies and scientific professional organisations. NSM will collaborate with corporate companies and practise due diligence to safeguard our professional practices. NSM does not condone unethical and unscrupulous practices by any individuals or organisations, whether in the public, private or civil society realm.

Tackling nutrition-related disorders, especially obesity, is a mammoth task that necessitates the collaboration of many agencies in the government and other stakeholders, including the private sector. Obesity and other NCD risk factors are at high levels and are well-established to be multifactorial in nature, and therefore require recognised multi-pronged approaches.

NSM calls for urgent, systematic and comprehensive preventive measures to be taken, rather than tackling any one single factor or food item. It is imperative that addressing NCD risk factors must start from a young age, among children. We urge all parties to be bold in taking on a multi-stakeholder approach, including public-private partnership, to implement these measures. With appropriate checks and balances in place, such partnerships can make progress in alleviating nutritional problems.



E Siong Tee, PhD
President
On behalf of 16th Council
Nutrition Society of Malaysia

1 January 2018