



**Oral Testimony from the American Cancer Society and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network at the Public Meeting on the *Scientific Report of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee***

*March 24, 2015*

On behalf of the American Cancer Society and the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network (ACS CAN), thank you for the opportunity to provide comments. The Society is a nationwide, community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem. ACS CAN is the nonprofit, nonpartisan advocacy affiliate of the Society.

One-fourth to one-third of cancer cases and up to one-third of cancer deaths are due to poor nutrition, physical inactivity, and excess weight. We are pleased that the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC) considered several common types of cancer as specific diet-related chronic disease outcomes.

We strongly support the DGAC's focus on the broad range of factors, including policies and environments, that influence people's diet and weight-related behaviors. It is imperative that the 2015 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* (DGA) policy report include the DGAC's evidence-based recommendations for policy, environmental, and systems changes. Americans will best be able to meet the guidelines when they have the necessary information and resources to do so, and their environments promote and facilitate healthy behaviors.

We are pleased that the committee made recommendations for overall healthy dietary patterns. The DGA should clearly state that there are several healthy dietary patterns, which share many of the same characteristics, including higher intakes of fruits, vegetables, fish, poultry, legumes, whole grains, and healthy oils, and lower intakes of added sugars, saturated fat, sodium, and red and processed meats.

We strongly support the recommendation to reduce consumption of red and processed meats. This recommendation is different from that in the 2010 DGA, which recommended choosing lean cuts of meat and poultry. Regular consumption of red or processed meat significantly increases long-term risk for colorectal cancer. It is essential that the DGA include the specific recommendation to reduce red and processed meat consumption and provide information about alternative protein sources that should be eaten instead, including beans, nuts, soy, lean poultry, and fish. This recommendation would also provide the scientific rationale for reducing red and processed meats, such as hot dogs, burgers, and pepperoni on pizza, in schools through the meal programs and a la carte. The regular consumption of these foods in schools increases children's long-term cancer risk.

Given that the majority of the population is overweight or obese, the DGA should also emphasize the importance of weight loss and/or maintenance, and appropriate, healthy weight gain among youth. To this end, the DGA should recommend limiting calories and portion sizes while meeting nutrient needs, getting regular physical activity, and avoiding prolonged inactivity.

We also support the DGAC's recommendation to reduce consumption of added sugars, including sugar-sweetened beverages. Added sugar provides calories without any nutrients, and consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, in particular, has been shown to lead to weight gain, diabetes and heart disease.

In closing, the DGA policy report will be most useful if it includes clear actionable guidance in three key areas:

- 1) Advice to consumers on how to meet the updated guidelines across the lifespan;
- 2) Sensible, science-based recommendations for changes to the food environment; and
- 3) Public policies that will support Americans making healthier food and beverage choices.

We look forward to submitting written comments with additional background and details about our recommendations.