

MEETINGS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Basil Hetzel's letters and manuscripts collection is available online

Preface by **Creswell J Eastman** AM MB BS MD FRACP FRCPA FAFPHM

Current Board Director of IGN and former Regional Coordinator for Asia Pacific Region and Vice Chairman of ICCIDD

In March 1985, while in India attending an international workshop on control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) in South East Asia sponsored by the WHO and UNICEF, Basil Hetzel put forward a proposal to establish the International Council for Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD). With the support of Rolf Carriere, David Haxton and several others, Hetzel persuaded the Executive Director of UNICEF and other international public health bodies to subscribe to his vision of a world virtually free from iodine deficiency disorders. This could be achieved through affected countries accepting and implementing iodized salt consumption programs and taking responsibility for monitoring progress and sustainability of these initiatives. One very important reason for his ability to influence others was that his arguments were underpinned by strong scientific evidence that irreversible brain damage, and not endemic goitre, was by far the most important consequence of iodine deficiency – and that it could be prevented. In 1983, Basil Hetzel had published an article in *The Lancet* entitled 'Iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) and their eradication';

this created a new paradigm for thinking about iodine deficiency and its adverse outcomes and forever changing the way we dealt with this problem and its eradication.

Hetzel's expanded vision of ICCIDD was for an international, multidisciplinary, collegial organization of experts, providing technical expertise to countries afflicted with IDD. He proposed an inclusive approach, well beyond the application of simply advocating iodine supplementation, recognizing that sustained success would also be dependent upon strong advocacy to mobilize the political will of relevant stakeholders, particularly in developing countries. In 1986, a year after putting forward his proposal in India, the ICCIDD was formally established at a meeting in Kathmandu with Basil Hetzel taking on the central role of Executive Director. In the early days Hetzel spent much of his time seeking funding, travelling and recruiting others to this fledgling organization. He was ably supported by a Board of Directors with John Stanbury as its Chairman, backed up by dedicated and experienced professionals serving as Regional Coordinators covering specific geographical

regions of the world to sustain the efforts of a truly global organization.

What has been achieved? From 1986 to 2005 while Basil Hetzel was at the helm of ICCIDD it matured and prospered to be a highly respected international organization, acknowledged as the global leader in the fight to eradicate IDD from our planet. From no more than a handful, the number of countries adopting Universal Salt Iodization exceeded 100 during this time, protecting an estimated 1 billion people from the ravages of IDD. All of this achieved at minimal cost and little fanfare. However, the battle is not yet over. ICCIDD, now rebadged as the Iodine Global Network (IGN), continues to provide global leadership in eradicating IDD. Basil Hetzel's legacy is indisputable. His untiring efforts and the achievements of ICCIDD over two decades have now been preserved in this historical collection of papers and manuscripts. Making these records available to all is a tribute to his prodigious memory, meticulous record-keeping and supportive staff.

Dr. Basil Hetzel's collection is available via the online library of the University of South Australia: <http://bit.ly/1Quz5Ee>

Symposium on iodine and pregnancy

The IGN will hold a Symposium on Iodine and Pregnancy for health professionals on 17 March 2016, at the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, London, UK

A number of recent studies have found that UK pregnant women are mildly-to-moderately iodine deficient. This is a concern, as a study published in the *Lancet* in 2013 showed that iodine deficiency in pregnancy was linked to lower IQ and reading ability in children up to 9 years. The aim of this symposium is to:

- Review the role and importance of iodine in pregnancy
- Discuss the iodine status in pregnancy in the UK
- Promote strategies for optimal iodine nutrition in pregnancy in the UK

This symposium will bring together experts from across Europe, including several members of the UK Iodine Group (Professor John Lazarus, Dr Mark Vanderpump, Dr Sarah Bath, Professor Margaret Rayman, Mr Michael Marsh, and Professor Kate Jolly) and the Iodine Global Network (Professor Michael Zimmermann, Dr Jonathan Gorstein).

This event is available for health professionals only.

To take advantage of late registration, please contact Janis Hickey: j.l.hickey@btf-thyroid.org. On social media, please use the hashtag: **#UKIodineMeeting**

The event is supported by:



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