Smart Choices Program: Rationale behind the nutrition criteria

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Committee on Examination of Front-of-Package Nutrition Rating systems and Symbols
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Disclosures

► Past President, ASN
► Board of Trustees, ILSI NA
► Member, Mars Scientific Advisory Committee
► Member Keystone Food and Nutrition Roundtable
► Scientific Advisor to ASN on Smart Choices Program (Formerly “Keystone”)
► National Advisory Panels: 2005 Dietary Guidelines; DRI Panel for Macronutrients; DRI Panel for Definition of Dietary Fiber
► Funding primarily from NIH/NCI; NASA; and NSBRI
Goal of the Program

► Short term:

- To provide a simple front-of-the-pack icon system to direct consumers to smarter food choices in the supermarket
  - Linking consumer food choice to the Dietary Guidelines/My Pyramid

► Medium term:

- Contribute to healthier diet choices and healthier foods

► Long term:

- Reduce diet-related chronic disease, particularly obesity
Brief Background on the Smart Choices Program

► Developed by a coalition
► Facilitated by the Keystone Group
► Administered by ASN and NSF

► The Coalition
  ▪ Scientists and nutrition educators
  ▪ Experts with dietary guidelines experience
  ▪ Public health organizations
  ▪ Food manufacturers
  ▪ Retailers
  ▪ Government observers
Brief Background on the Smart Choices Program

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► The Keystone Group
  Develops consensus solutions to complex health and social policy changes
Brief Background on the Smart Choices Program

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► ASN and NSF
  - **ASN**: Premier nutrition research organization, >3,000 nutrition scientists
  - **NSF**: 60 year old, not for profit, non-governmental organization
    - Develops national standards, product certification, third-party conformity assessment services
Why the Program was Developed....

► Proliferation of labels
  ▌ Confusing array of symbols

► Little uniformity
  ▌ Derived from different criteria
  ▌ Systems are inconsistent

► Absence of transparency
  ▌ Criteria not publicly available
Several key reports recommended a uniform system of symbols on the front-of-package labels

▸ Food Marketing to children and youth: threat or opportunity?, IOM, 2006.

▸ FDA needs to better leverage resources, improve oversight, and effectively use available data to help consumers select healthy foods. GAO-08-597 FDA Labeling Oversight, 2008.

Type of System and Nutrition Criteria

- Product Category Specific
  - The way people shop
  - Consistent with food product lines to encourage reformulation
  - Snacks compared to snacks not broccoli
  - Can differentiate “better for you” fats
  - 19 categories

Smart Choices Program.com

Both qualifying and disqualifying ingredients

The addition of beneficial nutrients is shown to better predict diet quality (Fulgoni et al. J Nutr. 139, 2009.)

Type of System and Nutrition Criteria

Based on Reference Amount

- Enables validation with Nutrition Facts Panel
- Consistent with how people eat
- Provides incentive to decreasing calories/serving

Type of System and Nutrition Criteria

- **Threshold system**
  - Must be below the threshold for nutrients to discourage and
  - Above the threshold for nutrients/food groups to encourage
  - Positives do not compensate for negatives

Nutrients to Limit

► **Total Fat**
  - <35% of calories
  - Consistent with US Dietary Guidelines; IOM Macronutrient Report
  - FDA “healthy” <30% of calories

► **Saturated Fat**
  - <10% of calories
  - Consistent with US Dietary Guidelines; IOM Macronutrient Report
  - FDA “healthy” <15% of calories

► **Trans Fat**
  - 0 g as labeled
  - More stringent than US Dietary Guidelines
  - Not part of FDA “healthy”

► **Cholesterol**
  - <60 mg
  - Consistent with FDA “healthy”

► **Sodium**
  - <480 mg/serving
  - Lower in a number of categories including breakfast cereals
  - Consistent with or stricter than FDA “healthy”

► **“Added Sugars”**
  - <25% of calories/serving (with some exceptions)
  - Based on IOM Macronutrient Report
  - Not part of FDA “healthy”
Calories Count

- Major emphasis of the Dietary Guidelines
  - “Americans should obtain adequate nutrients within calorie needs”
- FDA “Calories Count” Report
- Some data to suggest that products perceived as “healthy” have a “halo” effect

Nutrients and Food Groups to Encourage

Nutrients to Encourage
- Vitamins A, C, E
- Calcium, Potassium, Magnesium
- Dietary Fiber

► These are the “at risk” nutrients from the Dietary Guidelines
► Must have 10% of the DV consistent with FDA “good source”

Food Groups to encourage
- Fruits
- Vegetables
- Whole Grains
- Nonfat/ lowfat dairy

► These are the “food groups to encourage” from the Dietary Guidelines
► Must have ½ serving
Summary of Nutrition Criteria

► Product category specific
► Include negatives and positives
► Must be at or below the threshold for negatives
► At or above the threshold for positives
► In most cases as strict or stricter than FDA “healthy”
► Based on consensus science
► Transparent and available at SmartChoicesProgram.com
For further information

► Lupton JR et al. The Smart Choices front-of-package nutrition labeling program: rationale and development of the nutrition criteria. Am J Clin Nutr 2010;91: 1078S-89S

► SmartChoicesProgram.com