



Office of
Dietary Supplements

National Institutes of Health

A Report to the Public

Office of Dietary Supplements
Office of Disease Prevention
National Institutes of Health
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Fall 2008

*Introduction and Part 1: Comments from the Director
(5 pages)*

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Introduction

The *mission* of the Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) is to strengthen knowledge and understanding of dietary supplements by evaluating scientific information, stimulating and supporting research, disseminating research results, and educating the public to foster an enhanced quality of life and health for the U.S. population.

ODS is now more than 10 years old and is developing a strategic plan for 2010–2014. The Office's previous strategic plans have guided its activities and this report discusses some of the results of those activities.

This report has three parts:

1. Comments from the Director of ODS.
2. A review of ODS and its activities from 2004 to the present, as well as in the future.
3. A detailed report on the program activities through which ODS accomplishes its mission.

Please read this report and share your responses to the following questions:

- Are the current strategic goals adequate?
- Is ODS meeting its stakeholders' needs?
- In the future, should some of ODS's current programs or activities be given higher (or lower) priority?
- How can ODS more effectively provide useful information to the ODS user community, including consumers, investigators, practitioners, industry, media, policy makers, government, and other interested parties?

Ways to send in comments and questions:

- Send an e-mail to ODS: ODSPlan@od.nih.gov
- Contact ODS through its Strategic Plan Web site: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/strategicplan>
- ODS town meeting webinars: ODS will hold a series of four webinars at the times and topics listed below to hear comments on and suggestions for ODS initiatives for possible inclusion in the 2010-2014 ODS Strategic Plan. The topic is taken from the four areas described in this background paper, *A Report to the Public*. Each webinar will begin with brief comments by a Federal partner and a stakeholder on the topic of that webinar. The remainder of each webinar will be devoted to hearing public comments. You should register in advance to make an oral comment of up to three minutes (see ODS Web site above)

Research Support: Thursday, January 29, 2009, 1:00–2:00 pm EST

Research Tools: Tuesday, February 3, 2:00–3:00 pm EST

Science-Policy Interactions: Wednesday, February 11, 1:00–2:00 pm EST

Communications: Thursday, February 19, 2009, 2:00–3:00 pm EST

If you would like to participate in one or more of these webinars, register through the ODS Strategic Plan Web site: <http://ods.od.nih.gov/strategicplan>.

Note: All webinars will be archived on the ODS strategic plan Web site. So even if you cannot participate during the times listed above, you can view the session and submit comments or questions at a later time.

Part 1: Comments from the Director, Office of Dietary Supplements

The Office of Dietary Supplements (ODS) is a highly visible Office within the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Over the years, ODS has been the focus of considerable interest from many stakeholders. From time to time, it is fitting for the Office to submit itself to public scrutiny to share the remarkable outcomes of ODS investments and provide an opportunity for input into its future plans.

As ODS considers revisions to its current strategic plan, two issues stand out:

- The ODS budget probably will not grow significantly, if at all; thus, setting priorities and critically evaluating the output and the future of every ODS program are of paramount importance.
- ODS implements its goals through collaboration; to do that effectively, it needs to continue building its communication and outreach activities with various stakeholder communities.

Priority Setting and Evaluation. The budget for ODS (and, indeed, for all of NIH) has remained essentially unchanged since 2004, when the NIH budget stopped doubling. The appropriation is still a generous one and it continues to allow for the advancement of science in dietary supplements. This strategic planning period will permit a critical assessment of ODS's investments and what they have yielded. ODS needs and welcomes input from others to inform its decisions about future investments.

Building Communities. ODS is committed to promoting good science to inform public health policy and to help consumers make knowledgeable decisions about their own health care. To promote good science, ODS has partnered with research communities—academic, government, and industry—to promote development of the knowledge base for dietary supplements. These partnerships are detailed in this report.

It is truly gratifying that for every dollar that ODS invested in research related to dietary supplements in 2007, NIH invested \$17. This shows that NIH has been and continues to be committed to funding the best science on the health effects of dietary supplement ingredients.

Because the science of dietary supplements has a broad impact, ODS has also taken a leadership role in spearheading a number of research initiatives that extend beyond NIH. These initiatives include the evidence-based reviews on omega-3 fatty acids, soy, and vitamin D, together with their attendant Federal working groups. ODS also convened the Federal Dietary Supplement Working Group, which shares ideas and identifies initiatives to advance dietary supplement research. These initiatives and the working group include members from other agencies in the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), such as the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Agency for Health Research and Quality (AHRQ), and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as agencies from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of Commerce, and Department of Defense (DoD). Building bridges across government components has been very important to ODS in gathering input on and building partnerships to address emerging scientific issues related to dietary supplements.

In addition to representatives of a broad range of government agencies, industry-based researchers have informed ODS analytical methodology priorities through national meetings and workshops and have shared and collaborated in validating analytical tools. These interactions have contributed substantially to developing and disseminating the analytical tools and methods that are so essential for advancing the science of dietary supplements.

Enhancing communications. The effort to expand ODS communications and outreach activities has already paid off handsomely: ODS is able to respond rapidly and effectively to consumer and media inquiries; ODS staff are regularly called on to comment on new and emerging research; lines of communication are well coordinated; and the communications tools that ODS uses (Web site, fact sheets, exhibits at conferences, pamphlets) are valuable and current. These developments are an outcome of the evaluation of the ODS communications program in 2005 and are the basis for future improvements in communications and outreach.

Because ODS activities to stimulate and enhance dietary supplement research have implications for policy—such as nutrient intake recommendations and, by extension, national dietary guidance—ODS staff need to ensure that science is effectively translated into public policy. Therefore, outreach efforts by ODS include the policy community as well.

This report describes what ODS is currently doing to meet its legislative mandates and to enhance the health of the public. ODS invites review and comment from its stakeholders and other interested parties as part of the process for developing a strategic plan for 2010–2014.

Paul M. Coates, Ph.D.

Director, Office of Dietary Supplements in the Office of Disease Prevention, Office of the Director, NIH, DHHS