

Q&A on the updating of the Working Procedures of the *IARC Handbooks*

The [Working Procedures](#) of the *IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention* describe the principles and procedures used in developing the *IARC Handbooks*, including the scientific criteria that guide the evaluations.

On 11–13 February 2019, the Advisory Group to Recommend an Update to the Working Procedures will convene at IARC to review and update the current documents.

Why is an update to the Working Procedures being proposed?

The Working Procedures of the *IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention* were first published in 1995. After the relaunch of the *Handbooks* programme in 2014, the Working Procedures were updated separately for primary prevention and for secondary prevention (screening), taking into account the features of the current Preamble to the *IARC Monographs*.

The Advisory Group to Recommend an Update to the Working Procedures is being convened to consider recent scientific and procedural advancements that have occurred in the fields of primary and secondary prevention, and to establish clear guidance for future *IARC Handbooks*. The recommendations of the Advisory Group will also take account of any scientific input received by the *IARC Handbooks* programme in response to a “[Call for Public Comments](#)” announced via its website, in advance of the in-person Advisory Group meeting.

How will the review and update take place?

In order to take into account scientific input from all stakeholders, in the most comprehensive and transparent way, the process is twofold:

(1) Online submission of scientific comments

Before the Advisory Group meeting, IARC will solicit comments on the Working Procedures so that the Advisory Group can take account of the scientific views of a variety of different stakeholders. Scientific comments on the Working Procedures may be submitted online via the Public Comments Form on the *IARC Handbooks* website (closing date, 9 December 2018). Pertinent comments will be made available to the Advisory Group, and no material will be treated as confidential. Submitted comments are to be accompanied by a completed WHO Declaration of Interests form.

(2) The Advisory Group meeting

A group of international experts will be invited to be part of the Advisory Group tasked with reviewing and recommending updates to the Working Procedures of the *IARC Handbooks*. These expert Advisory Group members prepare and review preliminary pre-meeting materials and participate in the 3-day meeting to be held on 11–13 February 2019 in Lyon, France.

Who are the members of the Advisory Group? How are they selected?

The expert Advisory Group will include approximately 20 scientists. Eligible scientists will generally have published significant research related to interventions or strategies that can reduce the risk of cancer in humans, with expertise in epidemiology or in experimental studies. Through its “[Call for Experts](#)”, IARC is especially interested in finding: (a) scientists whose relevant work may not be found through standard literature searches; and (b) scientists who work in countries that have been under-represented in past Advisory Groups.

Before an invitation is extended, each potential participant, including members of the Secretariat, completes the WHO Declaration of Interests form to report financial interests, employment and consulting, and individual and institutional research support related to any intervention or strategy that may be reviewed by the *IARC Handbooks* programme.

IARC will establish an interdisciplinary Advisory Group on the basis of: (a) knowledge and experience; and (b) absence of real or apparent conflicts of interests, also taking into consideration nominations from various stakeholders and self-nominations. Consideration will also be given to gender balance and demographic diversity. The names and principal affiliations of the experts selected as members of the Advisory Group will be available on the *Handbooks* website approximately 2 months before the Advisory Group meeting.

Can experts from industry or nongovernmental organizations be selected as members of the Advisory Group?

Before an invitation is extended, each potential participant, including the Secretariat, completes the WHO Declaration of Interests form to report financial interests, employment and consulting, and individual and institutional research support related to any intervention or strategy that may be reviewed by the *IARC Handbooks* programme. IARC assesses these interests to determine whether there is a conflict that warrants limitation on participation, irrespective of the sector (academic, industry, nongovernmental, or other) in which the potential participant is working. The declarations are updated and reviewed again at the opening of the meeting. Interests related to the subject of the meeting are disclosed to the meeting participants and the public.

Will there be Observers, and what are the different roles of the people taking part in the Advisory Group meeting?

Five categories of participants can be present at the Advisory Group meeting:

(i) The *Advisory Group* is responsible for making recommendations to IARC on updates to the Working Procedures of the *IARC Handbooks*. The Advisory Group members are selected on the basis of: (a) knowledge and experience; and (b) absence of real or apparent conflicts of interests.

(ii) *Invited Specialists* are experts who have valuable knowledge and experience, but also have a real or apparent conflict of interests. These experts are invited when necessary to assist in the Advisory Group by contributing their unique knowledge and experience. Invited



Specialists do not serve as meeting chair or subgroup chair, draft any text, or otherwise contribute to the recommendations.

(ii) *Representatives* of national and international health agencies may attend the meeting because their agencies sponsor the *IARC Handbooks* programme or are interested in the recommendations of the Advisory Group. Representatives do not serve as meeting chair or subgroup chair, draft any text, or otherwise contribute to the recommendations.

(iv) *Observers* with relevant scientific credentials may be admitted to the meeting by IARC in limited numbers. Attention will be given to achieving a balance of Observers from constituencies with differing perspectives. They are invited to observe the meeting and should not attempt to influence it. Observers do not serve as meeting chair or subgroup chair, or draft any text. At the Advisory Group meeting, the meeting chair and subgroup chairs may grant Observers an opportunity to speak, generally after they have observed a discussion. Observers agree to respect the [Guidelines for Observers](#) at *IARC Handbooks* meetings.

(v) The *Secretariat* is made up of scientists who are designated by IARC and who have relevant expertise. They serve as rapporteurs and participate in all discussions. When requested by the meeting chair or a subgroup chair, they may also draft text or prepare tables and analyses.

What will be the focus of the review?

The meeting will focus on the Advisory Group recommendations concerning the major sections of the Working Procedures (general principles and procedures and/or scientific review and evaluation), and as such the agenda for the meeting may be organized to allow time for subgroup as well as plenary discussions.

Will IARC modify the current scheme of evaluation?

It is the role of the Advisory Group to make any recommendations, including on the evaluation statements that are described in the Working Procedures.

What is the expected outcome?

The expected outcome is for the Advisory Group to make concrete recommendations for updates to the Working Procedures of the *IARC Handbooks*. The discussions and conclusions of the Advisory Group will be published as a report on the *IARC Handbooks* website.

When and how will any possible changes to the Working Procedures be implemented?

IARC will take forward the recommendations of the Advisory Group into updated Working Procedures, to be published on the *IARC Handbooks* website in mid-2019.

Will the World Health Organization (WHO) be involved?

IARC is part of WHO. The Secretariat for the Advisory Group meeting will comprise both IARC staff and WHO staff with pertinent expertise.