

activematters opinion | Obesity and physical activity | February 19, 2016

What is the difference between Sugar and Tobacco – when it comes to government intervention!

Given the delays in the release of the Obesity Strategy, the unlikely introduction of a UK Sugar Tax and the funding of the Change 4 Life by the food and soft drinks industry – the perfect example of misdirection and delay!

Continuing misrepresentation of what constitutes ‘diet’ or ‘low(er) in sugar’...the parallel with tobacco is not that far fetched!!

The bigger question remains - WHY does Physical Activity continue to be treated as the 'poor relation' in all documentation/initiatives/strategy around children and obesity prevention? The only report that clearly states the critical role played by physical activity is that published recently by the WHO. We have the CMO guidelines for young children's physical activity -ratified by the Chief Medical Officer. Obviously the medical community have made the connection - so why is there no 'follow through'? Why are these guidelines (much stronger than 'recommendations') not considered as mandatory - implemented by those in Education - and under the aegis of Ofsted?'

Push the tobacco industry to change through economic incentives

Public health measures (including PH campaigns over the years - across countless countries) to reduce smoking would have more success if policy makers intervened to curb the vast profitability of the tobacco industry, say researchers.

The lucrative nature of the cigarette market, dominated by a small number of large shareholder-owned companies, results in a vigorous fight against any new public health measures that may disrupt their profit-making.

Lessons from other industries

The researchers from our School of Management and the University of Ottawa say governments should look to the success of past policies that have transitioned other industries towards products that are less harmful to health, such as the switch from leaded to unleaded petrol.

'Carrot and stick' incentives (Cameron is proposing a ‘carrot’ strategy for sugar, we propose ‘stick’ – a BIG ONE)!

The researchers suggest a new approach to competition policy and a range of 'carrot and stick' incentives including:

- tax differentials, which place combustible products, like cigarettes, at a marketplace disadvantage compared to less hazardous alternatives like e-cigarettes
- giving companies tax credits for the development of lower risk products
- more direct measures such as price controls and product licensing that favours lower risk products

Effective regulation of the industry to curb profits would create new appeal in less harmful commercial opportunities, such as e-cigarettes, thereby promoting an escape route for corporations and removing their need to fight so hard for the continuation of current tobacco markets.

There's a new Big Tobacco — and one industry is determined to silence its critics

Lawmakers and consumers are turning against big sugar, and soda companies are reeling.

In early November, the [Food and Drug Administration announced](#) that Americans should eat and drink no more than 50 grams of sugar — roughly the amount in a can and a half of Coke — each day.

The new proposal has been years in the making: Chatter of the need for a cap on sugar has been circulating among consumers, lawmakers, and public-health advocates since [research](#) in the early 2000s first linked our excessive consumption of the stuff with obesity, weight gain, and other health problems — especially in children.

Not surprisingly, soft drinks and processed-food companies are less than pleased. The American Beverage Association, the soda industry's main lobby group, has since invested [millions of dollars](#) fighting laws to tax and label sugary beverages. For its part, Coca-Cola has been accused of [pumping money into misleading research](#) that champions exercise over dietary changes for health and weight loss — the company has promised to [increase transparency](#) about these research partnerships going forward.

But if our diets are any clue into whether a sugar cutback could be useful, they reveal a pretty big area for improvement.

"Soda follows tobacco's playbook to the letter," Marion Nestle, a professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University and the author of the book "[Soda Politics](#)," which explores the relationship between soda industries, politics, and public health, told Business Insider.

While there's no doubt that fat or sugar are anywhere near as bad for us as cigarettes (as Nestle says point-blank: "Sugar is not tobacco") some headlines seemed to suggest as much. And the food and beverage industry reacted accordingly, scrambling to remove fats from foods.

Ironically enough, food makers began replacing all this fat with another ingredient: sugar.

Hence the makers of yogurt, cereal, and snacks started smacking "non-fat" or "low-fat" labels on all their products. Even candies like Twizzlers and Lemonheads — which each contain roughly 20g of sugar per serving (close to half the FDA's [new daily maximum](#) recommended allowance) — were proudly declared "fat free."

activematters | summary of what needs to be done urgently!

For parents

- Ensure all initiatives are presented to parents in an accessible, meaningful, sustainable and relevant format

For practitioners

- Receive relevant CPD training and long term support to ensure PD/health/well-being schemes/programmes are embedded in daily practice – and are part of all EY Ofsted inspections

For environment

- All Physical activity community initiatives to be fully supported by all agencies impacting on children's health/well-being
- Settings to be inspected by Ofsted for the promotion of physical activity and support for physical development as a prime area of the EYFSC

Multi-Agency taskforce

- Ofsted, PHE, DoE and DoH to work together in a cohesive and mutually supportive manner.
- A plan to be created with an agreed time scales and budgets to ensure on-going accountability by all parties

<http://uk.businessinsider.com/big-soda-is-fighting-science-on-sugar-2015-11?r=US&IR=T>

<http://uk.businessinsider.com/how-soda-is-the-new-tobacco-2015-12?r=US&IR=T>

<http://www.techinsider.io/how-soda-is-the-new-tobacco-2015-12>

<http://www.who.int/end-childhood-obesity/en/>

