Society for Social Medicine Annual Scientific Meeting 2018

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Oral presentations

Food policy

OP1 COST-EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FDA SALT REDUCTION TARGETS FOR THE PROCESSED FOOD INDUSTRY: ARE THERE INTERNAL INCENTIVES TO REFORMULATE?

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Background In 2016, the US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) proposed voluntary industry reductions in salt, a major modifiable risk factor for CVD, for processed foods. Yet, reformulation could cost the food industry up to $16 bn over 10 years, perhaps partly explaining why in 2017 Congress blocked the FDA from implementing these long-term voluntary targets.

Aim To estimate the potential health gains and health-related cost savings for food industry employees from the FDA salt targets. We defined the industry perspective as including all costs to the food industry and all health-related costs and health benefits to people working in the industry.

Methods Utilizing the validated US IMPACT Food Policy dynamic microsimulation model, we estimated QALYs gained, costs, and incremental cost effectiveness ratios (incremental cumulative cost per QALY gained, with costs and QALYs discounted at 3%) from 2017–2036 in individuals working in the wider food system (food services and drinking places; food and beverage stores; food manufacturing) and the subset of food manufacturing. Data sources included NHANES, matched to demographic data for workers from the American Community Survey, and meta-analyses of salt effects on blood pressure and blood pressure on CVD. Costs included industry reformulation costs, government costs, and health-related costs (healthcare, productivity, informal care) for individuals working in the industry.

We modelled the FDA salt targets under 2 scenarios:

a. Short–term, 100% compliance of 2-year reformulation targets with no further progress.
b. Long–term, 100% compliance of 10-year reformulation targets.

We tested our assumptions with probabilistic sensitivity analysis.

Results Achieving the short-term, 2-year reformulation targets would generate net discounted industry costs of ~$7 bn, health-related cost savings of ~$1.7 bn (95% UI: $1.0 bn, $2.9 bn) and health gains of ~60 000 QALYs (50 000, 77 000) over 20 years, with an ICER of ~$85 000 ($12 000, $243 000) per QALY gained. Achieving the long-term salt reduction targets could result in industry costs of ~$16 bn, health-related cost savings of approximately $5.1 bn ($3.4 bn, $8.3 bn), and industry health gain of ~1 80 000 (149 000, 209 000) QALYs, with an ICER of ~$60 000 ($2 000, $168 000).

For the subset of food manufacturing, the long-term salt reduction targets would lead to health-related savings of ~$1 bn ($0.6 bn, $1.6 bn) and ~32 000 (27 000, 37 000) QALYs gained with an ICER of $4 89 000 ($160 000, $1 052 000).

Conclusion Sustained salt reduction is estimated to benefit the overall food industry with a healthier workforce and partly offset the reformulation costs for the subset of the processed food industry.

OP2 DID PROPONENTS AND OPPONENTS OF THE SOFT DRINKS INDUSTRY LEVY USE THE NEWS MEDIA TO INFLUENCE THE POLICY DEBATE? A QUALITATIVE DISCOURSE ANALYSIS USING PRACTICAL REASONING

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Background There is growing body of evidence that indicates so-called unhealthy commodity industries (UCIs) such as alcohol and tobacco use similar tactics to resist upstream regulation and maximise profits. The media then offers UCIs a potentially important channel for direct lobbying of the public and policy-makers. In March 2016, the UK Government announced a soft drinks industry levy (SDIL) as part of its strategy to combat obesity and non-communicable diseases associated with excessive sugar consumption. The likely effectiveness of this policy has been hotly debated by stakeholders on opposing sides. The aim of this study was to use critical discourse analysis (CDA) to examine how SDIL proponents and opponents sought to influence the public and policy-makers through the news media, during a time of intense policy deliberation.

Methods We conducted a content analysis of news articles discussing the SDIL published in 11 UK newspapers between 1 April 2015 and 30 November 2016, identified through the Nexis database. Stakeholder citations were identified and imported into NVivo for qualitative coding according to a thematic typology developed and tested in a previous analysis of alcohol and tobacco industry tactics. CDA was then used to identify the presentation of circumstances, claims, counter-claims, alternative solutions, values, policy goals, means of achieving goals and consequences in order to uncover the argumentation used by opponents and proponents of the SDIL.

Results In the final sample of 491 newspaper articles, a range of 287 stakeholders were presented as citing 1761 arguments; 65% for and 35% against the SDIL. We identified three scenarios of argumentation: 1) The soft drinks industry as a public health stakeholder; 2) the SDIL as a small but important step in tackling obesity; and 3) the SDIL as a 'win-win' scenario. Our findings support the concept of a common 'playbook' of arguments used by opponents of the policy.

#Top scoring abstract. Abstracts marked # are one of the top 15 highest scoring abstracts.