Coca-Cola criticised by NZDA for culturally appropriating Maori language.

AUCKLAND, New Zealand: New Zealand has an oral health problem. Expense is one of the main factors that prevent people from visiting the dentist, and this results, in some instances, in oral health conditions similar to those of developing countries. However, sugar is another major issue, and in a recent statement, the New Zealand Dental Association (NZDA), Te Ao Mārama (the New Zealand Maori Dental Association) and Hāpai te Hauora (Maori Public Health) have criticised the use of the Maori language on Coca-Cola products.

The new marketing ploy by Coca-Cola focuses its sights directly on the New Zealand Maori population by labelling its products with slogans such as “Share a Coke with whānau [family]” and “Share a Coke with kuia [grandma]”. “This has shades of the tobacco industry here—a subversive insidious way to connect with people who suffer a disproportionate amount of dental disease and harm from a public health perspective,” said NZDA spokesperson Dr Rob Beaglehole.

According Dr Kirsten Robertson, a senior lecturer in the Department of Marketing at the University of Otago, New Zealand has a significant problem regarding the consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs). As reported by Dental Tribune International, New Zealand is the third most overweight nation in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development area, and 17% of adults’ total sugar intake comes from SSBs.

“This corporation which cares nothing for our mokopuna [children], our kuia and kaumātua [seniors], has appropriated our language to make a profit. Worse—they’ve singled out one of the worst areas of inequity in health outcomes—our whānau’s oral health. They should be ashamed,” said Hāpai Te Hauora CEO Selah Hart.

The introduction of a sugar tax is still to be debated in parliament, and direct action to protect some communities from persuasive marketing is also greatly needed. According to the NZDA, 2017–2018 data shows Maori are 1.36 times more likely than non-Maori to have teeth removed as a result of dental caries. According to a 2018 Best Practice Advocacy Centre New Zealand study, it was estimated that, in the Auckland region alone, over 40% of people of Maori, Pacific or Indian ethnicity aged 35–39 years have prediabetes.

By DTI

JOIN THE LARGEST EDUCATIONAL NETWORK IN DENTISTRY! AD

www.DTStudyClub.com

REGISTER FOR FREE!
DT Study Club — e-learning platform