Sugar, sugar...honey, money

By Aws Alani, UK

The sugar tax is finally upon us, but are corner shops or supermarkets for that matter likely to worry about this potentially threatening change to their flagship product line? The tax targets all drinks and equates to a tax of 24 pence per litre on those with the most sugar content. This could potentially equate to an increase in the price to the consumer, but bearing in mind that soft drinks are more accessible and cost less in the UK than water in many Third World countries, it is doubtful that things will change markedly.

There is the argument that taxing tobacco has had an effect on the uptake of smoking and the consequent addiction, but the evidence for this is relatively sparse and weak. Although a worthy initiative, taxing drinks may result in a greater squeeze on those who can afford it the least and I doubt whether little Jimmy will stop his tearful tantrums for penny sweets as a result of a celebrity chef's campaign as our sugar saviour. As a child of the eighties, these celebrity-led campaigns remind me of rock bands who decided that African poverty should be on the agenda, but this does not seem to be as important to them now. It would appear that it is easier to tax sugar than to provide funding for dentistry. Unfortunately, there is unlikely to be a symbiotic decrease in caries as a result.

Sugar overconsumption causes diabetes and obesity are leading causes of death and disability in the US, the birthplace of the canned, carbonated soft drink. Here, sugary beverages are corner shops or supermarkets for that matter likely to worry about this potential threat to their flagship product line. The tax targets all drinks and equates to a tax of 24 pence per litre on those with the most sugar content. This could potentially equate to an increase in the price to the consumer, but bearing in mind that soft drinks are more accessible and cost less in the UK than water in many Third World countries, it is doubtful that things will change markedly.

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One could argue that these public health problems are in part the result of overconsumption of sugar, which is likely to lead to obesity and type 2 diabetes. In contrast, as is the case with smoking, the harm caused by sugar is less direct but cumulative. The sugar content of a 330 ml can of cola is around 10 teaspoons, which is equivalent to the amount of sugar in 10 small pieces of candy. Over time, this excessive consumption can lead to a variety of health problems, including tooth decay, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. To combat this, the government has introduced a sugar tax, which aims to reduce the consumption of sugary drinks and encourage healthier choices. This is a welcome step towards improving public health, but it is important to remember that the root causes of these problems are systemic and require a comprehensive approach to address.

Sugar is also found in many other foods and beverages, so it is important to be mindful of the overall amount consumed. Reducing sugar intake can be challenging, especially for those with a sweet tooth. However, there are many healthy alternatives and strategies that can help in making the switch, such as using natural sweeteners, cooking with herbs and spices, and choosing whole foods. It is also important to develop healthy eating habits and make mindful choices about what we consume. By taking these steps, we can reduce our risk of developing health problems related to sugar consumption and promote a healthier lifestyle.