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 equal 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 consequence 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 overconsumption of sugar causes an inordinate amount of health problems. Indeed, Type II diabetes and obesity are leading causes of death and disability in the US, the birthplace of the canned, sugar-laden drink devastations. In contrast, but just as worrying, the emerging evidence shows that low-calorie drinks (49 per cent of the drink consumption in 2014) actually fuel hunger and trick one’s stomach into thinking that calories are on the way, only to be disappointed, resulting in further food-seeking behaviour. The ordering of diet beverages in all you can eat restaurants may not be as ironic as I first thought!

Erosive tooth wear seems to have been forgotten amongst overweight toddlers needing ear-to-ear clearances from bulimics who like to taste but do not like their waist to the energy drink crew who prefer machismo gothic graphic designs, the younger generation is likely to experience more dissolution of tooth tissue. At the other end of the spectrum, obese patients are more likely to develop diabetes, which in turn makes them more susceptible to periodontal disease. Society’s gluttonous overconsumption is manufacturing pathology unheard of 50 years ago.

Soy-based products are more accessible and cost less in the UK than water in many Third World countries. This is doubtless that things will change.

One could argue that sugar pollutes much in the same way that inefficient power stations do. The societal repercussions need to be managed by all, with no or little comeback for the fizzle producers. As carbonated drinks are so popular, these juggernaut companies are powerful and, as a result, dentistry; unfortunately, there is unlikely to be a symbiotic decrease in caries as a result.

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