

Sponsorship of National Health Organizations by Two Major Soda Companies

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Introduction: Obesity is a pervasive public health problem in the U.S. Reducing soda consumption is important for stemming the obesity epidemic. However, several articles and one book suggest that soda companies are using their resources to impede public health interventions that might reduce soda consumption. Although corporate sponsorship by tobacco and alcohol companies has been studied extensively, there has been no systematic attempt to catalog sponsorship activities of soda companies. This study investigates the nature, extent, and implications of soda company sponsorship of U.S. health and medical organizations, as well as corporate lobbying expenditures on soda- or nutrition-related public health legislation from 2011 to 2015.

Methods: Records of corporate philanthropy and lobbying expenditures on public health legislation by soda companies in the U.S. during 2011–2015 were found through Internet and database searches.

Results: From 2011 to 2015, the Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo were found to sponsor a total of 96 national health organizations, including many medical and public health institutions whose specific missions include fighting the obesity epidemic. During the study period, these two soda companies lobbied against 29 public health bills intended to reduce soda consumption or improve nutrition.

Conclusions: There is surprisingly pervasive sponsorship of national health and medical organizations by the nation's two largest soda companies. These companies lobbied against public health intervention in 97% of cases, calling into question a sincere commitment to improving the public's health. By accepting funding from these companies, health organizations are inadvertently participating in their marketing plans.

Am J Prev Med 2016;■(■):■■■–■■■. © 2016 American Journal of Preventive Medicine. Published by Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

The U.S. has one of the highest rates of obesity in the world.^{1,2} In 2008, obesity overtook smoking as the largest preventable cause of the loss of quality-adjusted life years.³ In 2012, 35% of American adults were obese and 69% were overweight or obese.^{4,5} In the same year, the U.S. spent an estimated \$190 billion treating conditions tied to obesity, or 20.6% of health expenditures.⁶ One factor behind the American obesity epidemic is soda consumption. The average American consumed 46 gallons of soda in 2009, giving the U.S. one of the highest rates of per capita soda consumption of any country.^{7,8} About half of Americans drink sugary drinks every day.^{9,10} Recently, it has been estimated that soda

consumption caused one fifth of weight gain in the U.S. between 1977 and 2007.¹¹ Therefore, finding ways to reduce soda consumption is important for improving public health and stemming chronic illnesses associated with soda consumption, such as obesity.

Health and medical organizations would naturally be expected to promote policies that reduce soda consumption.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2016.08.010>

However, it has been documented that a number of health organizations have retreated from this responsibility by withdrawing from public debate on policies to reduce soda consumption, opposing soda legislation, or actually collaborating with soda companies to produce joint educational materials.¹²⁻¹⁵ It has been suggested that the reason many health organizations support corporate goals, even at the expense of public health, is that they derive funding from these corporations.¹⁶ It is believed these sponsorships can affect the actions and voices of health organizations.^{12,13} Further, organizations may feel pressured to grant sponsors conference spots, which allow soda companies to present and speak at important health conferences and develop positive associations.¹⁷ As to why companies choose to sponsor national health initiatives, this has been explored by Rosenberg and Siegel¹⁸ in 2001: possibilities include brand awareness, positive brand associations, enhanced corporate image, and influence over social attitudes about the health impacts of a product.

The use of corporate sponsorship of health organizations by tobacco and alcohol companies to quell potential support for tobacco or alcohol control policies has been well documented.¹⁸⁻²⁰ Although the extent of sponsorship of health organizations by alcohol and tobacco companies has been well characterized, there has not been a systematic attempt to do so for soda companies. Several articles and one book have provided examples of such sponsorships,^{12,13,15,21,22} but a comprehensive analysis that identifies the nature and extent of these sponsorships is needed.

This study systematically identifies, describes, and analyzes the nature and extent of soda company sponsorship of health and medical organizations in the U.S. during the 5-year period from 2011 to 2015. It also examines the lobbying efforts of these companies to influence legislation designed to prevent obesity, in order to determine whether acceptance of funding from these companies is consistent with the mission of the sponsored organizations.

METHODS

Identification of Sponsorships

This study used a systematic approach to identify sponsorships of health organizations by the Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, or both between 2011 and 2015. A "health organization" was defined as a group, entity, or program involved in the public's health. Internet searches were conducted on Google for the terms *Coca-Cola* and *Pepsi* along with the terms *health*, *physicians*, *doctors*, *nurses*, *sponsorship*, *funding*, *corporate partner*, *nonprofit*, *organization*, and *philanthropy*. These search terms were inspired by similar studies on alcohol and tobacco sponsorships.^{18,20} For organizations that appeared in searches, the websites were scoured for evidence of sponsorship. Additionally, a thorough literature search

was completed, which yielded many papers with scattered references to sponsorships. When available, annual reports and sustainability reports of the Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo were reviewed.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. The Coca-Cola Company or PepsiCo sponsored the organization, where sponsorship is defined by financial contribution to an organization or any of its activities.
2. The organization was domestic or, if international, doing health work in the U.S.
3. Sponsorship must have occurred in the 2011–2015 period.
4. Sponsorship by a subsidiary was acceptable.

Excluded were any health campaigns established or run by the Coca-Cola Company or PepsiCo, as by definition these organizations must receive funding from one of these two companies.

The Coca-Cola Company has published a list of most of its recipient organizations, which was analyzed for sponsorships; however, PepsiCo has not followed suit.²³

Identification of Lobbying Against Legislation

Systematic searches were performed on Google and LexisNexis for articles about lobbying done by the Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo on public health legislation. The search terms were *Coca-Cola*, *Pepsi*, or *American Beverage Association* along with *lobbying*, *legislation*, *bill*, and *soda tax*. The American Beverage Association is the main lobbying arm of the soda industry that is funded by the Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, and other soda companies. The terms *legislation*, *lobby*, and *bill* were chosen, rather than *law* or *statute*, in order to find laws that were actively under debate—not already passed.

The inclusion criteria were as follows:

1. Any lobbying or actions related to public health legislation from 2011 to 2015;
2. Lobbying that supported public health was included (only one such bill was found); and
3. The legislation could be federal, state, or local.

Gross annual lobbying totals were determined through the lobbying tracker at www.OpenSecrets.org. This organization analyzes millions of records to create summary data. As OpenSecrets does not state companies' positions, outside articles were used to supplement the data.

RESULTS

In total, 96 national health organizations were found to have accepted money from the Coca-Cola Company, PepsiCo, or both (Table 1). A total of 12 organizations accepted money from both companies (13%), one accepted money from just PepsiCo (1%), and 83 accepted money from the Coca-Cola Company only (86%). Interestingly, whereas PepsiCo sponsored 14% of these health organizations, the Coca-Cola Company sponsored 99%. However, this discrepancy may be an artifact due to Coca-Cola's recent disclosure of its sponsorships.²³



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مجدداً تکرار فرمایید و اگر باز هم با این

مشکل رو به رو شدید، از طریق فرم تماس

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برای جستجو در میان موضوعات، به محض این که عبارت خود را در فیلد زیر بنویسید، موضوع های مرتبط در درخت سمت چپ با رنگ متمایزی مشخص می شوند.

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جستجو ...

جستجو

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- علوم اقتصادی + <
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کد رهگیری

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