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The Health Reformer

Caution: In food marketing, the bottom line is taste

“New Orleans (AP) - ... public concern about fat has declined in recent years, even as obesity has reached epidemic proportions.

‘Health is not the primary driver in our food selection. You must have taste first,’ said Robert Brown, who follows industry trends for snack-food giant Frito-Lay.

.... Among supermarket shoppers who said they are concerned about nutrition, only 46 percent of consumers say they are worried about the fat content, down from 60 percent in 1996, according to a poll last year by the Food Marketing Institute.

.... ‘In marketing, the bottom line is taste,’ said K.C. Hayes, a Brandeis University scientist...

Fat affects not only the flavor, but also the color and texture of foods.” *HealthCentral.com (June 25, 2001)*

Please note: “Keep appetite under the control of reason....

There is a large class who will oppose any reform movement, however reasonable, if it places a restriction on the appetite. They consult taste instead of reason or the laws of health. By this class, all who leave the beaten track of custom and advocate reform will be accounted radical, no matter how consistent their course.” *The Ministry of Healing, p. 232*

“Very many with perverted tastes shrink at the thought of restricting their diet, and they continue their unhealthful indulgences.” *Confrontation, p. 77*

The popular notion that moderate drinking reduces mortality should be reconsidered

“Drinking moderate amounts of alcohol may not have the health benefits of long life that have been previously asserted, due to flaws in research methods, Japanese researchers report.

‘Our findings should caution researchers and the public to reconsider the existing evidence and the popular notion that moderate drinking is good for general health,’ study author Dr. Yoshitaka of the Tohoku University Graduate School of Medicine in Sendai, Japan, told Reuters Health.

Several previous studies have demonstrated that drinking moderate amounts of alcohol seems to reduce mortality.

However, the authors point out that those studies have a methodological flaw: they generally compare drinkers with nondrinkers, but fail to distinguish between those who never drank alcohol and those who quit drinking for health reasons.

Lumping nondrinkers with ill health into the group

that abstains from alcohol entirely may produce findings of an elevated mortality risk seemingly associated with not drinking.

The investigators questioned more than 22,000 men aged 40 to 69 in northern Japan on their drinking frequency in 1990, then tracked the men until 1997. The results were published in a research letter in the September 12th issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association*.

By separating the two groups of nondrinkers, Tsubono and colleagues found that ex-drinkers did have a higher risk of mortality than nondrinkers and that moderate drinkers did not actually have decreased mortality when compared with those who had never been drinkers.

‘Our results shows that, if an inadequate comparison group (never drinkers combined with ex-drinkers) is used, the protective effect of moderate drinking is seriously exaggerated,’ Tsubono noted. ‘Thus, moderate drinkers spuriously showed a decreased risk when compared with nondrinkers, which erroneously included both ex-drinkers and never drinkers.’ ”

HealthCentral.com, September 13, 2001

Guess who has greatly benefited from all the erroneous and exaggerated promotion given to the “health benefits” attributed to moderate drinking? Answer: The alcohol industry.

When will we learn that moderate drinking is wrong and extremely dangerous?

Quitting coffee may help the heart

“New York (Reuters Health) – A new study from Norway has found that coffee drinkers who quit drinking caffeinated filtered coffee cut their blood levels of cholesterol and the protein homocysteine.

High levels of both substances are known risk factors for heart disease.

.... Lead author Dr. Benedicte Christensen of Ullevål University Hospital in Oslo, Norway, explained that ‘it is not only unfiltered coffee, but notably normal filtered coffee affects cholesterol and homocysteine.’ ”

HealthCentral.com (August 27, 2001)

High fiber diet can cut cancer risk by 40%: study

LONDON (Reuters) – “A high fiber diet can slash the risk of developing deadly cancers by as much as 40%, scientists said Saturday.

Results from the biggest ever study into diet and cancer, involving 400,000 people from nine countries and presented at an international

(Over, please)

conference in France, showed fiber was particularly important in reducing cancer of the colon and rectum.

'These are the first positive results for the benefits of fiber from such a large group. We placed 400,000 people on the study into five sets according to their consumption of fiber,' Professor Sheila Bingham of the Dunn Human Nutrition Unit at Cambridge University said in a statement released in London.

'The group eating the most fiber reduced their risk of colorectal cancer by as much as 40%,' she added.

The findings were part of the EPIC (European Prospective Investigation of Cancer and Nutrition) study that was reported at the European Conference on Nutrition and Care in Lyon, France.

Medical experts believe up to 30% of all cancers in the developed world are associated with nutritional factors and could be avoided by better-balanced diets.

The EPIC study, which began 15 years ago, also showed a decreased chance of developing colon cancer in people eating lots of fish, but a raised risk in those consuming large amounts of preserved meats such as ham, bacon and salami.

People are advised to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day to achieve optimum health and avoid cancer.

Professor Nick Day said the landmark study should set the record straight on diet and cancer.

'There have been reports recently that appear to suggest fruit and vegetable consumption isn't important in reducing the risk of colorectal cancer,' Day said.

'This wide-ranging study is likely to give us a much truer picture of the links between cancer and diet,' he added.

.... 'These findings are important because of the sheer scope of the EPIC study. They put fiber firmly back on the menu as an important part of a healthy diet,' said Professor Gordon McVie, the director general of the Cancer Research Campaign, which sponsored Bingham's research." *HealthCentral.com (June 25, 2001)*

How the Tobacco industry and the Alcohol industry try to clean up their image

NEW YORK (Reuters Health) – "The tobacco industry is shelling out millions of dollars in corporate sponsorships and donations to health-related causes--a move researchers say is intended to clean up the industry's image.

Between 1995 and 1999, tobacco companies sponsored at least 2,730 events, programs and organizations in the US, according to a report in the September issue of the journal *Tobacco Control*.

'We estimate that tobacco companies spent no less than \$365 million on sponsorship during the study period,' write Drs. Michael Siegel and N. Jennifer Rosenberg of Boston University School of Public Health in Massachusetts.

The money supported a wide range of interests--with sponsorship of motor sports (\$208 million) being followed by donations toward fighting hunger (\$104 million).

The performing arts received the largest number of sponsorships at 56, followed by minority-related groups and events with 41. Other key groups that received tobacco companies' support include domestic violence prevention and rodeos.

A large number of sponsorships went to organizations working in public health, in areas such as AIDS and the environment, Siegel said in an interview with Reuters Health.

'By making contributions to organizations involved in public

health campaigns, the tobacco companies try to change the public's perception of the fact that they sell products that kill people,' he stated. 'Sponsorships offset the negative public image that they have.'

Siegel also believes that such sponsorships cause many smaller organizations to become dependent on the tobacco industry's funding. This, he suggested, may cause these groups to be less likely to speak out against smoking or the tobacco industry and make them less likely to support tobacco control policies.

The people who run these organizations may 'fear that if they speak out...they will lose their funding,' Siegel said.

The researchers urge public health practitioners to keep better track of tobacco industry funding and to 'consider promoting a ban on tobacco sponsorship.'

Such regulation, they note, could be linked to the creation of alternative funding sources for organizations and events."

HealthCentral.com (September 07, 2001)

How is the Alcohol industry trying to clean up its image? "The dependence of media outlets, both broadcast and print, on revenues derived from alcohol ads serves as a censor on information about alcohol's health and safety risks and about the industry's efforts to recruit new and heavier users. Media coverage of drug problems routinely eliminate discussion of alcohol.

In her testimony to the United States Senate on alcohol advertising, Dr. Kilbourne documented numerous instances in which alcohol advertising served to eliminate from magazines and news programs appropriate discussion of alcohol's contribution to morbidity and mortality. According to Kilbourne, alcohol advertising 'drastically inhibits honest public discussion of the problem in the media and creates a climate in which alcohol is seen as entirely benign.'

How can we address the large role played by alcohol advertising in nurturing alcohol problems, glorifying drug use, and contributing to widespread denial about the nature and breadth of alcohol problems in individuals, families, congregations, and in the society at large?

In the policy arena, alcohol advertising presents us with our greatest challenge. It is not difficult to persuade ordinary citizens that alcohol advertising is counterproductive to efforts to reduce alcohol and other drug problems. To date, however, efforts to restrict alcohol advertising have been largely unsuccessful.

In the United States Congress, where thousands of bills are introduced every session, advocates have been unable to garner as many as a dozen cosponsors of legislation to require equal time for health and safety messages about alcohol. The same legislators who seriously propose the invasion of third-world countries to address drug trafficking are loathe even to consider restrictions on advertising beer and wine. The combined forces of the alcoholic beverage industry, the advertisers, and the major media companies have a vested interest in the maintenance of a *laissez-faire* policy in regard to alcohol advertising. All have considerable political influence." *By Christine Lubinski (Health 20-20)*

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