



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 2, 2012

California Researchers Recommend Regulating Sugar Like Alcohol

First it was the Happy Meal, then it was school junk food, and now it's sugar. It seems that in the state of California no food is safe from the reach of overzealous elitists who wish to see the government regulate nearly every facet of American lives. The latest example features a group of researchers from the University of California San Francisco who are advocating that the federal government control sugar in the same way it does alcohol and tobacco.



According to the self-styled experts, Drs. Robert Lustig, Laura Schmidt, and Claire Brindis, there is potential for sugar "abuse," and that possibility, along with sugar's "toxicity and pervasiveness in the Western diet," make it a dangerous component in a critical worldwide situation.

"We are in the midst of the biggest public health crisis in the history of the world," declared Dr. Lustig. "And nobody even gets it. Nobody understands how important this is because they don't consider it 'public health.' They consider it 'personal responsibility.' "

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The researchers are not making assertions which are entirely new. Other studies have already pointed out that sugar consumption has tripled over the past 50 years, and have indicated that it is a contributor to a possible "obesity epidemic." But Lustig, Schmidt, and Brindis assert that obesity is just one problem resulting from sugar's toxicity.

"As long as the public thinks that sugar is just 'empty calories,' we have no chance in solving this," asserted Dr. Lustig, a professor of pediatrics at the UCSF Benioff Children's Hospital and director of the Weight Assessment for Teen and Child Health (WATCH) program at [UCSF](#). "There are good calories and bad calories," he added, "just as there are good fats and bad fats, good amino acids and bad amino acids, good carbohydrates and bad carbohydrates. But sugar is toxic beyond its calories."

These doctors contend that sugar has contributed to the death of 35 million people annually through diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Because of this, they contend that sugar consumption should be curbed, if not by individual choice, then by government mandate.

"There is an enormous gap between what we know from science and what we practice in reality," Dr. Schmidt said, "In order to move the health needle, this issue needs to be recognized as a fundamental concern at the global level."

Dr. Brindis has declared that the public must be better informed about the dangers of sugar and that



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there should be a “wide approach” taken similar to one with tobacco and alcohol.

The researchers made several recommendations, such as special sales taxes, limited access, and “tightening licensing requirements” on vending machines and snack bars which sell products containing sugar. They ground their argument in the notion that it would ultimately be cost effective, as 75 percent of health care dollars are spent treating diseases caused by sugar consumption.

Dr. Lustig went so far as to recommend that sugar products be barred from being sold to consumers under the age of 17.

“We’re not talking prohibition. We’re not advocating a major imposition of the government into people’s lives,” claimed Dr. Schmidt, professor of health policy at UCSF’s IHPS and co-chair of UCSF’s Clinical and Translational Science Institute’s Community Engagement and Health Policy Program. “We’re talking about gentle ways to make sugar consumption slightly less convenient, thereby moving people away from the concentrated dose. What we want is to actually increase people’s choices by making foods that aren’t loaded with sugar comparatively easier and cheaper to get,” she said.

Dr. Schmidt’s words seem to echo the same [sentiments](#) found in *Nudge — Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness*, written by President Obama’s regulatory czar Cass Sunstein. The book provides a variety of measures which can “nudge” Americans toward healthier lifestyles, using behavioral psychology to give the appearance that citizens are in fact making the decisions themselves.

Sunstein has indicated that the presence of too many choices can be confusing to the American people. In describing the premise of his book, he virtually claimed that the American people were too ignorant or lacking in control to make proper decisions. “We think there is a little Homer Simpson in all of us. Sometimes we have self-control problems, sometimes we’re impulsive. In these circumstances, both public and private institutions, without coercing, can make our lives a lot better,” he insisted.

There’s good news, according to Sunstein, however. “Once we know that people are human and have some Homer Simpson in them, then there’s a lot that can be done to *manipulate* them.” [Emphasis added.]

Similarly, left-wing writer Mike Adams adheres to the philosophy that the American people are not sharp enough to make their own choices. He writes:

On top of that, mainstream consumers are disturbingly gullible. If a product is positioned as being healthy, that’s what people believe it’s for, even if it makes no sense whatsoever. After all, why do so many people believe [Slim-Fast](#) will make them lose weight even though it’s made mostly from processed refined sugar?

Adams, like some of his fellow leftist elitists, believes that since the American consumer is not responsible enough to make his or her own decisions, the government should regulate those decisions for the people.

Michelle Obama has made healthy living her platform, and has encouraged the same tactics suggested in Sunstein’s *Nudge*. Claiming that Americans are “programmed” to make unhealthy choices through taste and advertising, the First Lady contends that it is the job of the federal government to reprogram the personal tastes of Americans: “The more of these [healthier foods] people eat, the more they’re accustomed to that taste, and after awhile, those unhealthy foods become a permanent part of their eating habits.”

In an effort to reprogram the American people, an advertisement campaign was launched in



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Washington, D.C. which featured a man lying on a gurney, gripping a fast-food hamburger. The man is rolled through a hospital past his grieving widow.

President Obama has jumped on board with the premise of nudging. In his 2009 commencement speech at Hampton University, he contended, "I think we can all take steps to become healthier, and there's nothing wrong with us giving a little nudge in moving people toward the direction of healthier lifestyles."

For Dr. Lustig, that "nudging" could include taxing the desire to eat sugar out of Americans. And her suggestion has some precedent, given the federal government's treatment of cigarettes.

"No one's really talking about how much tax will it take to reduce consumption," Ludstig said, "We saw this with cigarettes. We basically had to raise the price of a pack up to \$11 in New York City to get people to actually stop smoking. And they finally decided: 'You know what? The craving just isn't worth it.'"

"So the question is how much taxation would you have to do to a can of soda to get somebody to say 'You know? I really don't need to do that?'" Lustig asked.

Attempting to assuage the concerns of people who may feel that approach to be draconian, Dr. Brinidis added, "There have been a lot of other public health campaigns, which initially seemed to be very radical, but today they seem extremely mainstream."

"We recognize that there are cultural and celebratory aspects of sugar," acknowledged Brindis, director of UCSF's Philip R. Lee Institute for Health Policy Studies (IHPS). "Changing these patterns is very complicated."

Photo: UCSF's view of Americans?



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