



Tuesday February 11th 2020

Fore Immediate release

Policy can make the difference: LANDMARK CHILEAN LAW IS EFFECTIVE IN TACKLING DRIVERS OF OBESITY

Studies show policies do work to reduce consumers' sugary drink purchases, children's exposure to unhealthy food marketing and advertising

New evidence is surfacing indicating that a suite of policy efforts is having a steady and deep impact on a country's national effort in its fight against childhood obesity. This latest news comes from Chile, a country which like Barbados, is being confronted by high rates of childhood obesity and high incidence of non-communicable Diseases.

The three studies, published in peer-reviewed journals, underscore why the Barbadian Government should strongly consider effective front-of-package warning labels and marketing restrictions as part of obesity prevention efforts, says the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados.

In 2016, Chile implemented the Law of Food Labeling and Advertising, which is the first national regulation that requires front-of-package warning labels on foods and beverages high in added sugars, salt, or saturated fats, restricts child-directed marketing of such foods, and bans the sales of these foods in and near schools. A [Public Health Nutrition](#) study found that the Chilean policy led to significant reductions in children's exposure to junk food ads. An [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#) study found that there was a significantly lower use of child-directed marketing strategies in sugary breakfast cereal packages as a result of the Chilean policy.

While sugary drink purchases had decreased slightly after implementation of a previous 5% tax of sugary drinks, there were much larger reductions in the volume of high-in-sugar beverage purchases once the additional policy measures went into effect. **A collaborative study between researchers at the University of Chile's Institute of Nutrition and Food Technology, the University of North Carolina, and Mexico's Instituto Nacional de Salud Pública found that bundled obesity prevention policies led to a significant reduction in purchases of sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) in Chilean households (24%).** The findings were published in the online peer-reviewed weekly medical journal PLOS Medicine on February 11, 2020. The study underscores how a comprehensive policy can strongly influence consumer behavior.

CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados Mrs. Michelle Daniel, said, "Like Barbados, Chile is showing disturbing rates of obesity and overweight among both its children and adult population. The decision by the Chilean government to implement a comprehensive basket of

obesity prevention policies has led to substantial reductions in the marketing and purchase of sugar sweetened beverages in just three years. It is clear that the World Health Organisation's proposed policies can help to urgently reduce the challenge of obesity and non-communicable diseases. We look forward to our government implementing policies like these sooner rather than later."

The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados welcomes the Chilean studies' findings, which provide growing evidence that the policy in that country has been effective. More importantly, this strong scientific evidence demonstrates that front-of-package warning labels and marketing restrictions influence how unhealthy products are marketed to children. At present, the Caribbean is negotiating revision of food labeling standards to mandate inclusion of front of package 'high in' warning labels on prepackaged foods, through CARICOM's Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ). These labels should help consumers better understand what is in their food and make healthier choices.

See below our list of experts who are available for interviews on this release are:

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