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What does advocacy look like in a government-funded mass-media led public education campaign?

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Introduction: The frequency with which Australians consume energy dense, nutrient poor junk foods is a major concern. Over consumption of junk foods contributes to chronic diseases including overweight and obesity and, through displacement of core foods, also contributes to nutrient deficiencies. A very large number of processed junk foods are sold in an abundance of locations in Australia, and are heavily marketed and promoted.

The junk food industry plays a significant role in preventing implementation of policies and regulatory initiatives that may impede upon sales of unhealthy foods. The advertising and marketing of junk food to children and the building of fast food outlets in close proximity to child services are political and ethical issue that have serious consequences. Urgent legislative action is required to address the deficiencies of the current self-regulatory and voluntary system.

Methodology: LiveLighter[®] builds capacity for policy discussions and changes by

Monitoring junk food advertising and lodging complaints to the Advertising Standards Board (ASB);
Supporting communities to advocate for changes to local government planning decisions with regard to the building or expansion of fast food outlets in their area;
Generating significant media coverage regarding public health policy issues;
Implementing tactical media advocacy strategies to address policy issues; and
Monitoring public opinion on public policies through weekly online tracking surveys ($n = 75$ per week), and annual computer-assisted telephone surveys ($n = 700$ to $n = 1500$).

Findings: The Advertising Standards Board upheld a complaint about a television advertisement for Coco Pops.

Communities can slow and/or stop the progress of building applications for fast food outlets.

There is strong public support for government to implement healthy public policies directly related to regulating junk food and drink.

Conclusion: Government-funded mass-media led campaigns have a significant role to play in softening the ground for the development of healthy public policy.

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Partnering and parenting transitions in Australian men and women: associations with changes in weight, domain-specific physical activity and sedentary behaviours

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Background: Partnering and parenting are important life-stage transitions that may associate with changes in weight, domain-specific physical activity (PA) and sedentary behaviours in young adults.

Methods: 2,124 Australian adults (mean age 31.7 (2.7) years, 47.5% male) completed questionnaires in 2004–06 and 2009–11 and reported marital and parental status, and weight (kg). Physical activity (PA) and sedentary behaviours were measured in a subset ($n = 1,217$) using the International PA Questionnaire. Linear regression estimated the associations of life-stage transitions (those remaining not partnered or childfree were reference groups) with the change in weight, PA or sedentary behaviour during follow-up, adjusted for baseline weight/PA/sedentary behaviour, age, education, follow-up duration and other life-stage transition.

Results: During the 5-year follow-up, 17.3% men and 12.9% women became partnered, and 27.3% men and 19.1% women had their first child. Becoming partnered had little effect on weight, total PA and sedentary behaviours although women who partnered gained weight (β 2.2 kg, 95% Confidence Interval (CI) 0.6 to 3.7). For women only, separation/divorce/widowhood was associated with less sitting time (β 49.5mins/day, 95% CI 1.7 to 97.2) than remaining partnered.

Compared to remaining childfree, having a first child during follow-up was associated with significant reductions in total PA (β –119.9 mins/week, 95% CI –227.9 to –12.0) and TV viewing time (β –26.4 mins/day, 95% CI –46.5 to –6.2) in men. Women having a first child gained weight (β 1.6 kg, 95% CI 0.4 to 2.9) and spent less time sitting (β –108.5 mins/day, 95% CI –139.4 to –77.7). For women only, having additional children was associated with less sitting time (β –42.2mins/week, 95% CI –68.6 to –15.9) than having the same number of children.

Conclusions: Women appear to be more susceptible than men to weight and sedentary behaviour changes following partnering transition. Parenting transition was associated with both health-promoting and health-damaging changes in men and women.

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