

BASCD 2024 Abstract #25

Cracking the sugar code: Welsh teenagers' perspectives on sugar content in beverages

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Background:

Public Health England revealed that teenagers surpass recommended sugar intake by triple, primarily from beverages, with NHS England noting most hospital admissions among teenagers' stem from dental caries. Improving dental hygiene comprehension hinges on teenagers' awareness and understanding of sugar content.

Objectives:

To evaluate teenagers' knowledge on sugar content in beverages and perception of sugar measures.

Methods:

Welsh students aged 11-16 completed questionnaires, on awareness of sugar content in eight beverages, weekly consumption frequency, tooth filling status, and knowledge of grams of sugar in a teaspoon. Ethical approval was not obtained as the study was part of a quality improvement project to improve awareness at school.

Results:

One hundred and one out of 169 questionnaires were completed. Overall, 70.4% underestimated sugar content in drinks (Individual percentages: Innocent smoothie 93.1%, Ribena 89.1%, Frijj 83.2%, Lucozade 63.4%, Sprite 60.4%, Costa Hot chocolate 60.4%, Coke 59.4%, Monster 54.5%), 98% consumed a sugary drink at least once a week, 55% had at least one tooth filling. 83.1% underestimated total grams in a teaspoon of sugar. Correlation between sugar underestimation in drinks and unawareness of grams in a teaspoon measure was statistically significant ($p < 0.019$).

Conclusion:

Equipping adolescents with the ability to decipher sugar quantities logically is imperative. The collaborative involvement of parents, schools, and communities is pivotal in amplifying awareness among teenagers. Governmental intervention mandating easily comprehensible sugar content labelling, such as teaspoons rather than grams, is crucial in improving dental health.

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