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Topic: Law and regulation in public health nutrition

Title: Achieving the World Health Organization sodium target: Estimation of reductions required in the sodium content of packaged foods and other sources of dietary sodium

Presentation Type: Oral

Introduction: World Health Organization (WHO) member states have agreed on a voluntary global target for a 30% relative reduction in mean population sodium intake, with the aim of reaching 2g (5g salt) per day by 2025. Our aim was to develop a sodium reduction model to determine the reductions required in the sodium content of packaged foods and other dietary sources to reduce population sodium intake in New Zealand adults by ~30% towards the WHO target.

Methods: Nationally-representative household food purchasing data were linked with branded food composition information to determine the average contribution of packaged food categories to total population sodium consumption. Discretionary salt use and the contribution of sodium from fresh foods and foods consumed away from the home were estimated using national nutrition survey data. Targets were set for packaged food categories and other sources, until a ~30% reduction was achieved.

Results: A 36% reduction (628mg sodium or 1.6g salt) in the sodium content of packaged foods combined with a 40% reduction in sodium from other sources would reduce total population sodium intake by 35% (from 3.4g to 2.2g (5.5g salt)/day), meeting the WHO target. Important reductions included 21% in the sodium content of white bread, 27% for hard cheese, 42% for sausages, and 54% for ready-to-eat breakfast cereals.

Conclusion: Achieving the WHO sodium target in New Zealand will require considerable efforts by both food manufacturers and consumers, and will likely require a mandatory targets set by Government as part of a formal national sodium reduction strategy.