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Topic: Law and regulation in public health nutrition

Title: Agenda setting and stakeholders' participation in debates surrounding the Mexican soda tax

Presentation Type: Oral

Introduction:

A soda tax policy was implemented in Mexico in January 2014. The aim of this study is to examine stakeholders' participation on the agenda setting and how it shaped the policy outcomes. It is part of a comprehensive policy analysis of the soda tax.

Methods:

Forty one semi-structured interviews were conducted with stakeholders involved in the policy process, and 145 documents were analyzed. An iterative thematic analysis was conducted using a combined top-down and bottom-up approach. A review of several theories and frameworks guided the initial analysis. It included the applied policy research framework, policy analysis triangle and network and power approaches. Codes' reviews were completed to improve validity and reliability.

Results:

Approaches to influence public perception included: calls for action, marketing strategies, coalition building; and use of "the right to health" and "the multi-causality of obesity" rhetoric. Effectiveness of the soda tax was highly discussed and publicly polarized. Formal and informal links between different types of actors were identified: between senators and civil society, between government and soda industry; and between academics and either soda industry or civil society. The ministry of finance was seeking funds, with a positive reinforcement through the involvement of academics, legislators and civil society for the soda tax, but highly challenged by the soda industry.

Conclusions: This study describes contextual factors and stakeholders' links, positions and used strategies to help explain the agenda setting behind taxing soda. Lessons drawn from this research may have implications for public health governance in similar topics.