

Author: Lisa Ware

Co Author: Karen Charlton; Aletta Schutte; Paul Kowal (South Africa)

Topic: Law and regulation in public health nutrition

Title: SALT BEHAVIOURS AND SALT INTAKE IN SOUTH AFRICAN ADULTS, A PRE-LEGISLATION BASELINE: PRELIMINARY RESULTS FROM THE WHO SAGE STUDY

Presentation Type: Oral

Introduction: In June 2016, South Africa implements legislation limiting maximum sodium levels in a range of foods in an attempt to curb the epidemic of hypertension in the country. This study was designed to establish baseline salt-use behaviours and sodium intake prior to legislation coming into effect.

Methods: Participants were recruited using a nested cohort design within the World Health Organization Study on global AGEing and adult health (WHOSAGE), a multi-national longitudinal study of the health and well-being of adults and the ageing process (18+ years, with an emphasis on adults 50+ years). The SAGE-South Africa cohort consists of randomly selected households (n=4583 adults) across the country; 24-hour urine samples were collected in a random sub-sample and sodium analysed. Salt-behaviour questionnaires and sociodemographic data were collected at the same time.

Results: Median age of the group was 56 years (IQR 24; n=2922; 67% female; 72% urban). While 71% believed a high salt diet could cause health problems, only 7% considered they consume too much salt; 46% reported never or rarely adding salt to food at the table but 56% always added salt in cooking. Median daily salt excretion (n=530) was 6.7g salt/day (1-43 g/day). In comparison to WHO recommendations, 69% had a salt intake above 5g/day.

Conclusions: Given the high reported level of salt being added during cooking, the effect of the sodium-legislation is unpredictable. However, with so many being unaware of their high salt intakes, it is possible this remains the best strategy to reduce population intakes.