

Editor's Note

Decreasing the Sale of Sugary Beverages

How Sweet It Is

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The consumption of sugary beverages is a serious problem in the United States that is associated with obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Therefore, the success that Howard County had in decreasing the sales of sugary beverages—through a broad-based community intervention that included media, community engagement, and policy changes—is gratifying.¹



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The editors were as impressed with the rigor of the methods as the decrease in soda and fruit drink sales. Too often programs are declared a success (or failure) based on temporal

changes (or lack thereof). However, without a control group, how can one determine whether the changes seen are attributable to the intervention? By using a difference-in-differences approach, the authors adjusted for temporal changes and differences between communities at baseline. Also, the authors compared sales based on store register data rather than relying on self-reports, which are subject to social desirability bias.

Public health campaigns can never be evaluated with the precision of laboratory experiments. However, these authors demonstrate the value of a well-performed evaluation of an important public health intervention. Other communities should implement similar programs.

Conflict of Interest Disclosures: None reported.

1. Schwartz MB, Schneider GE, Choi Y-Y, et al. Association of a community campaign for better beverage choices with beverage purchases from

supermarkets [published online March 6, 2017]. *JAMA Intern Med*. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2016.9650