

WEBINAR

Healthy
Eating
Research

Conducting Strategic Science: Harnessing Science for Social and Policy Change

Tuesday, June 24

11:00 am - 12:00 pm EST



Kelly Brownell
Duke University



Christina Roberto
University of
Pennsylvania

Logistics

Participants will be automatically muted when joining

Ask any tech or logistics questions for the host in the chat bar

20 minutes of audience Q&A at the end of the session – ask questions for the presenters in the Q&A bar



Today's webinar

Presentations (40 minutes)

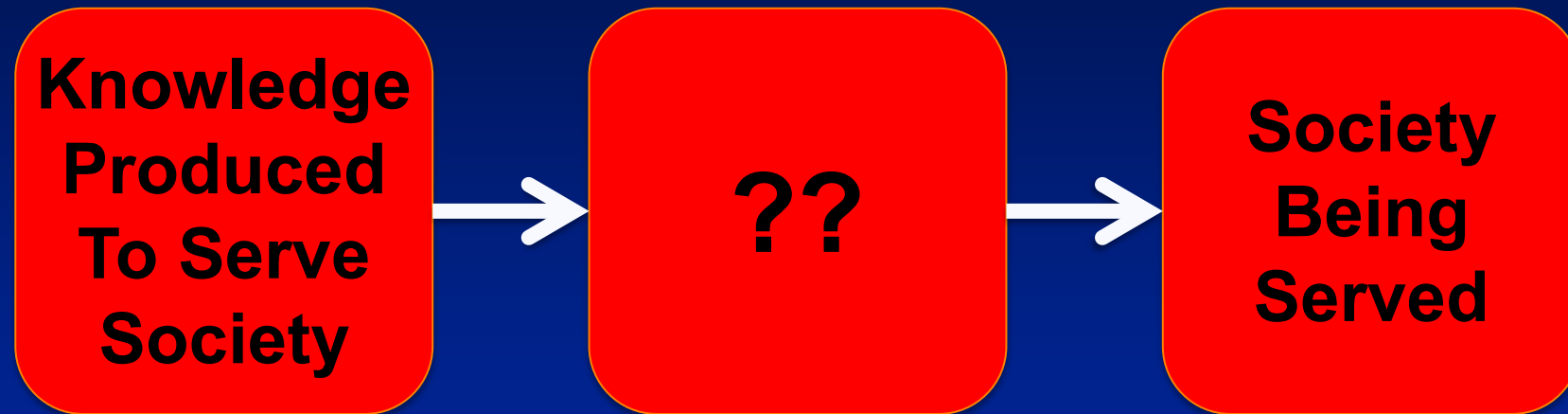
- **Kelly Brownell, PhD**, Robert L. Flowers Professor Emeritus of Public Policy, Dean Emeritus, Sanford School of Public Policy, Duke University
- **Christina Roberto, PhD**, Mitchell J. Blutt and Margo Krody Blutt Presidential Associate Professor of Health Policy at the Perelman School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania

Q&A (20 minutes)

- *Facilitated by* Megan Lott, MPH, RDN
Deputy Director, Healthy Eating Research

**How Good Are We, Really,
At Creating Change?**

Creating Impact From Knowledge



The Frustration

Research = small audiences

Research misses key audiences

Poor links of scholarship & policy

How We Construe Impact

Citation Indices

h-index

i10-index

Journal Impact Factor



Slow Movement in a Fast World

Slow



Poorly communicated



Unresponsive



Programmatic only



Conflicted

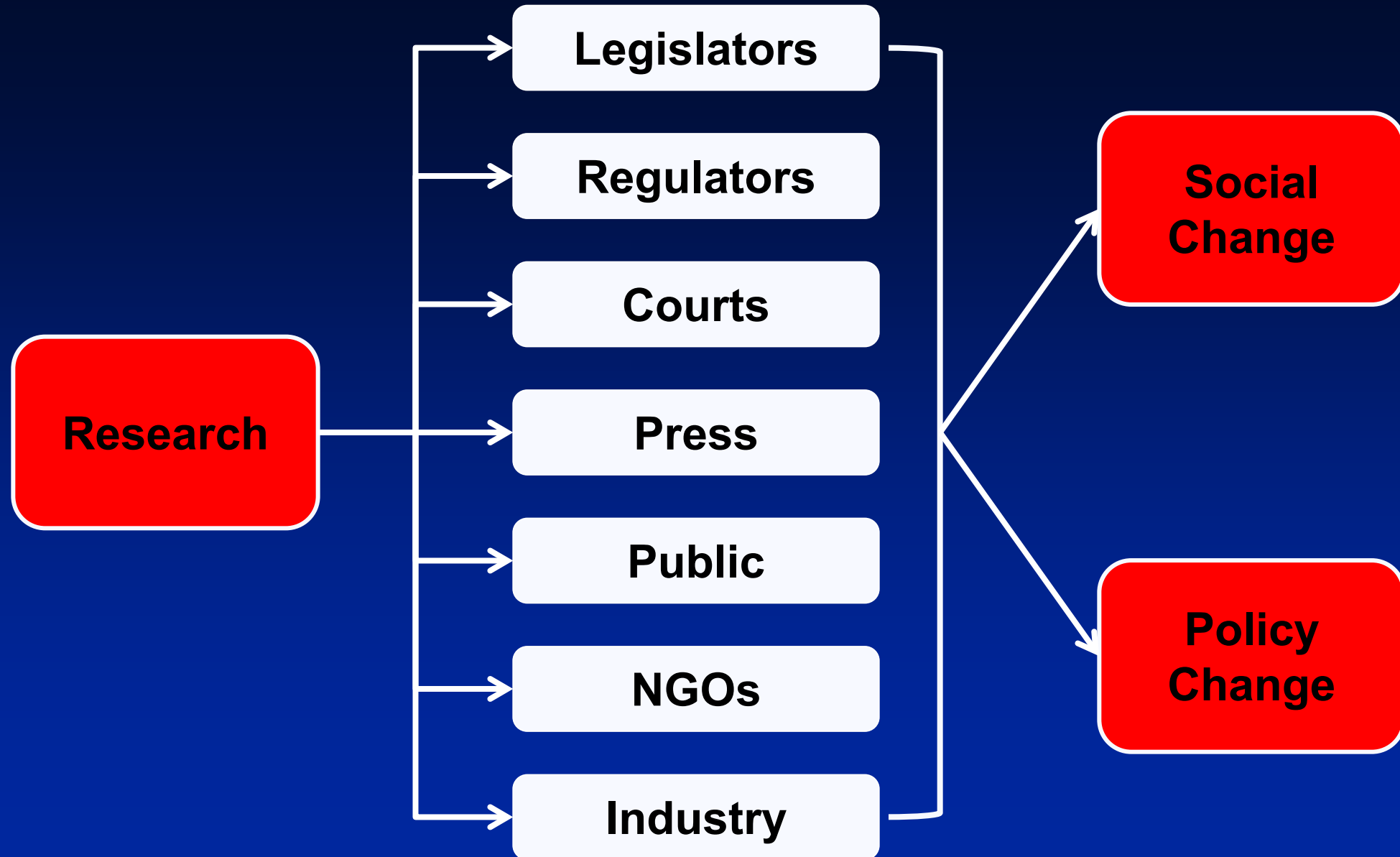


Indecipherable jargon



Linking Scholarship To Public Policy

**How We Addressed
A Fundamental Challenge**



**Can We Create
a Virtuous Cycle
of Solutions?**


```
graph TD; A[Identify Change Agents] --> B[Develop Strategic Questions]; B --> C[Research]; C --> D[Communications]; D --> A;
```

Identify Change Agents

Develop Strategic Questions

Research

Communications

Science



**Change
Agents**



Science



**Change
Agents**

Strategic science with policy impact



Evidence-based policy making is an important aspirational goal, but only a small proportion of research has the policy impact it might have. Most researchers are not trained to create policy impact from their work, engagement with policy makers is not encouraged or rewarded in most settings, and the communication of scientific findings occurs within the academic community but rarely outside it. There are exceptions, but little is done to systematically link scholarship to policy.

back to the policy world. Change agents include elected leaders at any level of government, key individuals in regulatory agencies, legal authorities and legislators, the media, non-governmental organisations, and global institutions, such as the World Bank, the World Trade Organization, or WHO.

The second step is to develop strategic questions. Interactions between researchers and policy makers can help identify the questions that need to be addressed for the policy process to be fully informed.

Published Online
February 18, 2015
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/
S0140-6736\(14\)62397-7](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)62397-7)

See Online/Series
[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/
S0140-6736\(14\)61744-X](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(14)61744-X)

Example

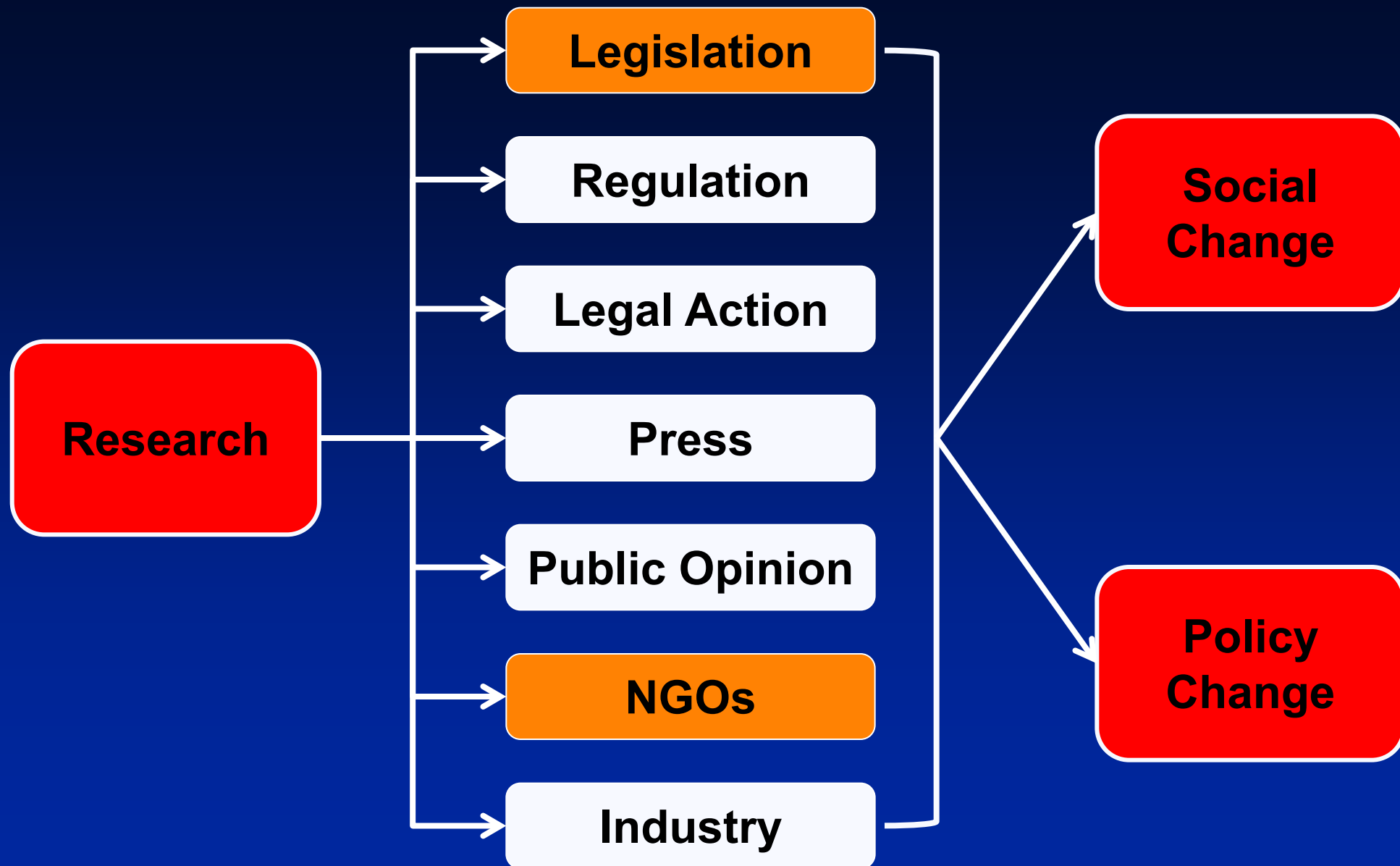
Industry and Menu Labeling

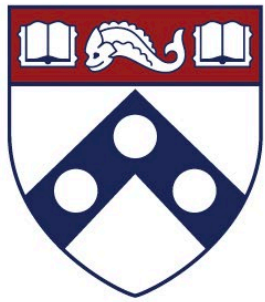


An observational study of consumer use of fast-food restaurant drive-through lanes: implications for menu labelling policy

Christina A Roberto*, Elena Hoffnagle, Marie A Bragg and Kelly D Brownell

Department of Psychology, The Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, Yale University, PO Box 208369, New Haven, CT 06511, USA



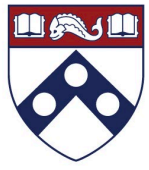


Center *for* Food
and Nutrition Policy

UNIVERSITY *of* PENNSYLVANIA

Strategic Science for Nutrition Policy Impact

Christina A. Roberto, PhD
Mitchell J. Blutt & Margo Krody Blutt
Presidential Associate Professor of Health Policy



Center for Food
and Nutrition Policy
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA



Mission

Identify & evaluate policies and interventions that promote healthy diets and prevent nutrition-related chronic diseases.

What I observed about Kelly & his ability to influence how people think about our food system

1

Be an excellent communicator

2

Write public pieces

3

Be responsive & eager to help

4

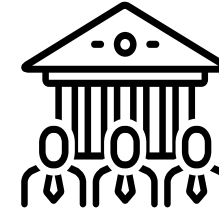
Be honest about what you know & don't know

Our policy impact strategy

IDEAS



Identify ideas with solid research



Legal experts

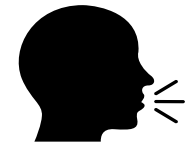
ACCESSIBILITY



Research briefs
or reports



Opinion
writing

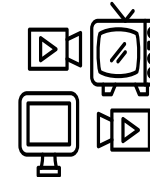


Give
talks

ENGAGEMENT



Public
comments/testimony



Tip off
the media



Meetings with policymakers
& change agents



Request Mtgs
(e.g., 12866 OMB
Meetings)

Strategic Science Research Examples



Food labeling

Non-policy channels to influence important
outcomes

Smart Choices Program



SMART CHOICES PROGRAM
GUIDING FOOD CHOICES

120 CALORIES PER SERVING | **9 SERVINGS PER PACKAGE**

HOME

NUTRITION CRITERIA

FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

FOR MEDIA

SMART CHOICES PROGRAM™

Helping Guide Smart Food and Beverage Choices

The Smart Choices Program, a front-of-pack nutrition labeling program, is not currently conducting active operations pending the outcome of FDA's front-of-package rulemaking process. For more information, view the program's [press release](#). The program was developed because of the need for a single front-of-pack nutrition labeling system that U.S. food manufacturers and retailers could voluntarily adopt to promote



What were some Smart Choices?

How smart
were
Smart
Choices?

CT Attorney General – Key Change Agent



"Smart Choices" Food Labeling Program Halts Over FDA Concern

First Posted: 10-24-09 01:11 AM | Updated: 03-18-10 05:12 AM



WHAT'S YOUR REACTION?

Search HuffPost

Inspiring Greedy Typical Scary Outrageous Amazing Innovative Infuriating

Read More: [Fda](#), [Food](#), [Food Labeling](#), [Food Labels](#), [Kellogg's](#), [Smart Choices](#), [Business News](#)

Like

Be the first of your friends to like this.

43

SHARE

0

views

retweet

174

comments



(AP) PORTLAND, Ore. - A food industry group is voluntarily halting promotion of its nutrition labeling program after federal regulators said such systems could mislead consumers, officials with the group said Friday.

Industry leaders launched the "Smart Choices" program in August to identify foods that meet certain nutritional standards and then highlight them for consumers with a green label on package fronts.

But the Food and Drug Administration said Tuesday that there are so many labeling programs with different criteria that they may mislead consumers about the health benefits of certain foods. The agency told manufacturers it will crack down on inaccurate labeling, although it did not name specific products or give a timeline for enforcement.

Lessons in Influencing Outcomes

1

Ask the right question at the right time

2

Science can influence through channels other than policy

3

Don't be afraid to reach out to change agents

Balancing scientific curiosity & policy needs

Testing Warning Label Designs

Public
health
advocates

Legal
Team

Nutrition
Scientific
Advisory
Board

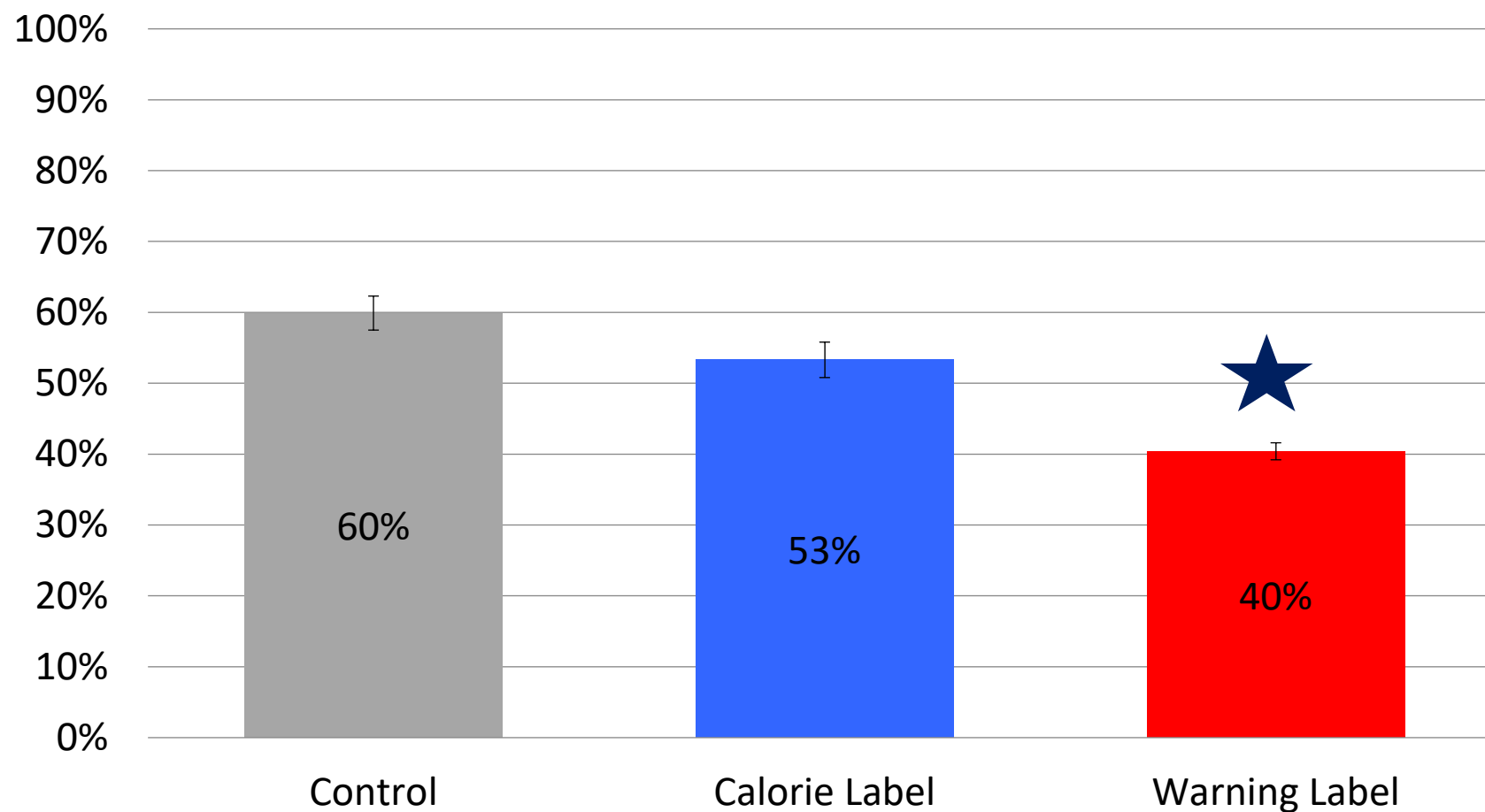
SAFETY WARNING: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, type 2 diabetes, and tooth decay.

Randomized to 1 of 6 groups
(n = 2,381 parents)

NO LABEL CONTROL



% parents choosing a sugary drink



Submitted written testimony

Testimony of Dr. Christina Roberto, PhD

Assistant Professor of Medical Ethics and Health Policy, Perelman School of Medicine
University of Pennsylvania

Submitted to: Baltimore City Council Health Committee
Re: Sugar-Sweetened Beverages – Warning Labels (Council Bill 16-0617)

June 7, 2016

Chairman Curran and members of the committee:

My name is Christina Roberto. I am an assistant professor of medical ethics and health policy at the University of Pennsylvania's Perelman School of Medicine. I also serve as Director of the [Psychology of Eating And Consumer Health \(PEACH\) lab](#), which conducts research on a number of policies designed to promote healthy eating and reduce obesity.

The United States is in the throes of an obesity epidemic. [More than 2/3 of adults and nearly 1/3 of children are overweight or obese](#), with even higher rates among certain socioeconomic populations. In an encouraging trend, national rates for both children and adults have stabilized in recent years and [a growing number of states and cities have reported childhood obesity rate declines in recent years](#). Nevertheless, persistently high rates continue to have negative health and economic consequences across the country.

As the committee is aware, the obesity epidemic extends to Baltimore as well. [Nearly half of Baltimore school-age children are overweight or obese](#). According to the 2016 *County Health Rankings*, nearly [35 percent of adults in Baltimore City are obese](#)—approximately 25 percent higher than the Maryland statewide average). Moreover, the *Rankings* show that Baltimore City has the second-lowest food environment index—a measure of factors that contribute to a healthy food environment—in the entire state.

R01 to research graphic warning labels



Lessons in balancing scientific curiosity & policy needs

1

Policy & research goals might not always align

2

Try to accomplish both

3

But if you can't, figure out if the project will position you well to pursue your other scientific interest later

Creating partnerships

A clear glass jar filled with coarse, white and pink Himalayan salt crystals is tilted on a dark brown wooden surface. A pile of the same salt crystals has spilled out from the jar's opening. The text "Sodium reduction" is overlaid in white with a thin black outline.

Sodium reduction

sweet potato fries & dips ▲

Sriracha chile lime, BBQ bacon ranch & maple-flavored cream cheese sauce. (1070 cal) 9.59

mozzarella sticks (910 cal) 11.79

boneless wings ▲

Choice of honey BBQ, spicy sweet Asian chile, classic or hot buffalo sauce. (1100-1160 cal) 17.59

double crunch bone-in wings ▲

Choice of honey BBQ, spicy sweet Asian chile, classic & hot buffalo or Thai peanut sauce. (1180-1140 cal) 17.59

CR SNACKS

salsa verde nachos ▲
Choice of shredded brisket or pulled pork, spicy queso blanco, cheddar, pico, fresh jalapeños. (1080/1110 cal)

brew pub pretzels & beer cheese dip ▲

Blue Moon® white cheddar cheese dip & honey Dijon mustard. (1060 cal) 12.59

spinach & artichoke dip ▲ (930 cal) 12.19

chicken quesadilla ▲

Chipotle-lime chicken, salsa verde, pico. (980 cal) 15.99

the classic combo ▲

Appetizer sampler featuring mozzarella sticks, spinach & artichoke dip, chicken quesadilla, boneless wings. (2620 cal) 25.99

Testing Sodium Warning Label Designs for Philadelphia



SODIUM WARNING

 **SODIUM WARNING**

 **SODIUM WARNING**

 **SODIUM WARNING**

 **HIGH SODIUM**

 **LOW SODIUM**



Chicken Quesadilla Basket


 **SODIUM WARNING**

1050 Calories

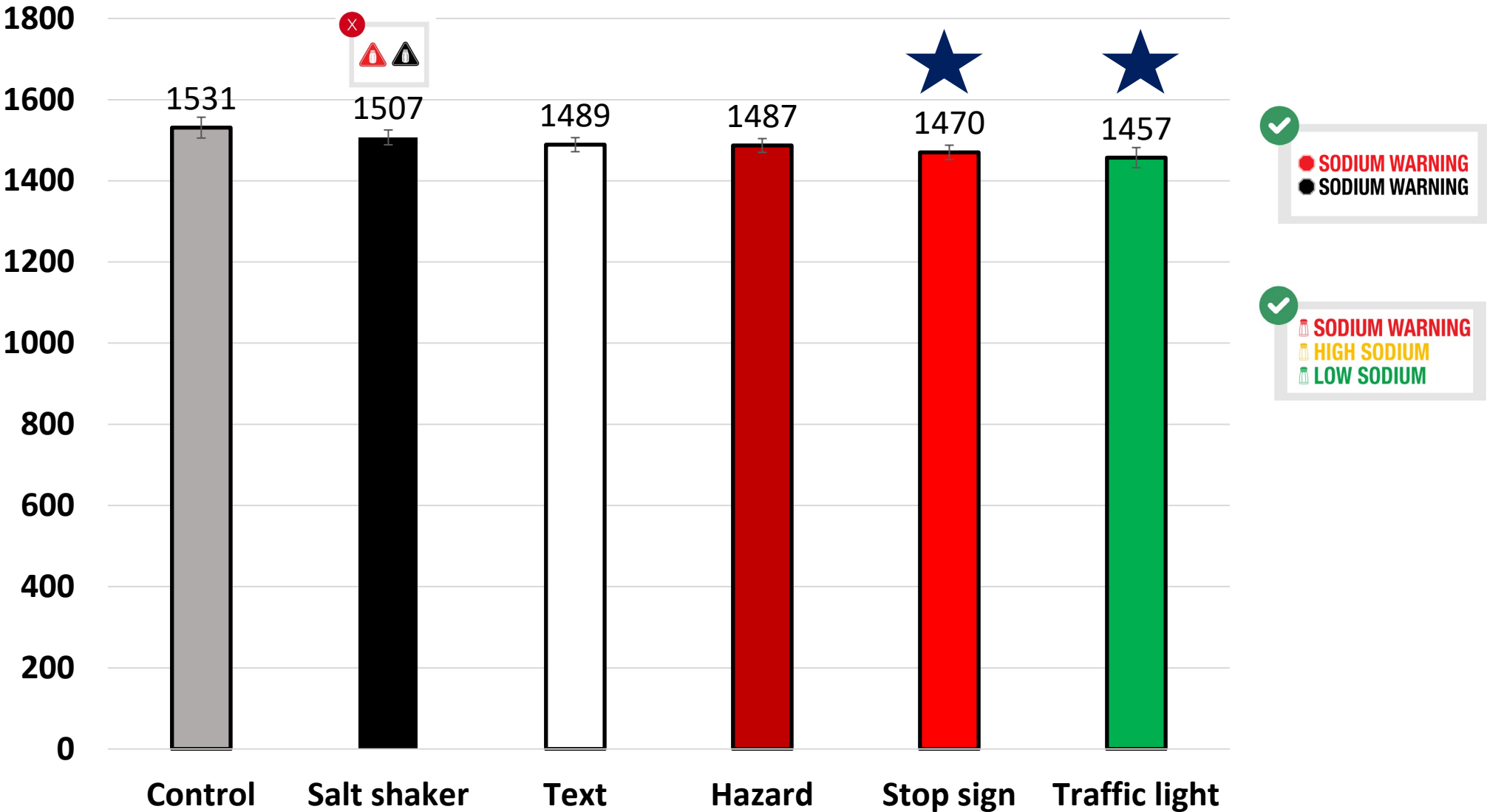
\$5.39

Chicken quesadilla served with sour cream, salsa, and onion rings.

2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice, but calorie needs vary. Additional nutrition information available upon request.

Warning:  **SODIUM WARNING** indicates that the sodium (salt) content of this item is higher than the total daily recommended limit (2,300 mg). High sodium intake can increase blood pressure and risk of heart disease and stroke.

Avg. sodium (mg) ordered for 2 restaurant meals (n=4,477)



Philadelphia Inquirer OpEd & Council Testimony

Sodium content needs to be on the menu at Philly restaurants. Here's why

Updated: JANUARY 29, 2018 — 5:01 PM EST



SIGNATURE PIZZAS

completely customizable 9.85

MEAT EATER 930 cal
pepperoni, meatballs, red
onion, mozzarella, red sauce


RED VINE 660 cal
ovalini mozzarella, tomatoes,
parmesan, basil, red sauce,
olive oil drizzle

BBQ CHKN 760 cal
chicken, mozzarella,
red onion, banana
peppers, gorgonzola,
bbq drizzle

ART LOVER 750 cal
artichokes, mozzarella, ricotta,
garlic, red sauce dollops

GREEN STRIPE 730 cal
pesto drizzle, chicken, garlic, red
peppers, mozzarella, arugula

VEG OUT 780 cal
seasonal veggies, mushrooms,
red onion, mozzarella,
gorgonzola, red sauce dollops

HOT LINK 790 cal
 **SODIUM WARNING**
spicy red sauce, jalapeño,
sausage, black olive, red onion,
banana pepper, mozzarella

WHITE TOP 770 cal
white cream sauce, mozzarella,
bacon, garlic, oregano, arugula

WARNING:  indicates that the sodium (salt) content of this item is higher than the total daily recommended limit (2,300 mg). High sodium intake can increase blood pressure and risk of heart disease and stroke.

Salt Reduction Works. The FDA Should Be Allowed To Set Tougher Limits, LDI Experts Say

Reduction Limits Save Lives and Money, and Even Food Firms Back Them. So Why Doesn't Congress Act?

August 22, 2024

By: [Christina Roberto, PhD](#), Marlene Schwartz, PhD, and Alyssa J. Moran, ScD, MPH

Print:  | Share:   



Lessons for creating partnerships

1

Signal you are interested in helping

2

Be curious

3

Be nice & humble

4

Offer to give a talk

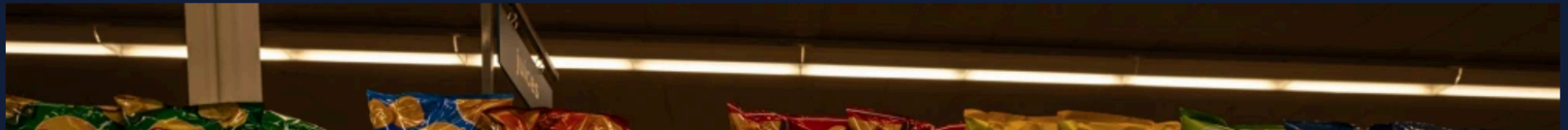
Can I be a scientist and an
advocate at the same time?



U.S. NEWS

FDA expected to propose a label change to packaged foods: Nutrition info on the front

The proposal, expected in the coming months, would put key nutrient details on the front of food in addition to the label on the back. It faces resistance from food trade associations.



The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

OPINIONS

[Editorials](#)

[Columns](#)

[Guest opinions](#)

[Cartoons](#)

[Submit a guest opinion](#)

[Today's Opinions r](#)

Opinion We're ready for nutrition labels that make sense

By Christina A. Roberto, Alyssa Moran and Kelly Brownell

March 6, 2024 at 6:15 a.m. EST

Can I maintain my scientific integrity & advocate for policies?

1

Am I an expert on the topic?

2

Have I thought about the issue deeply?

3

Have I talked to different people to understand a wide range of perspectives on the issue?

4

Then who better to educate policymakers?

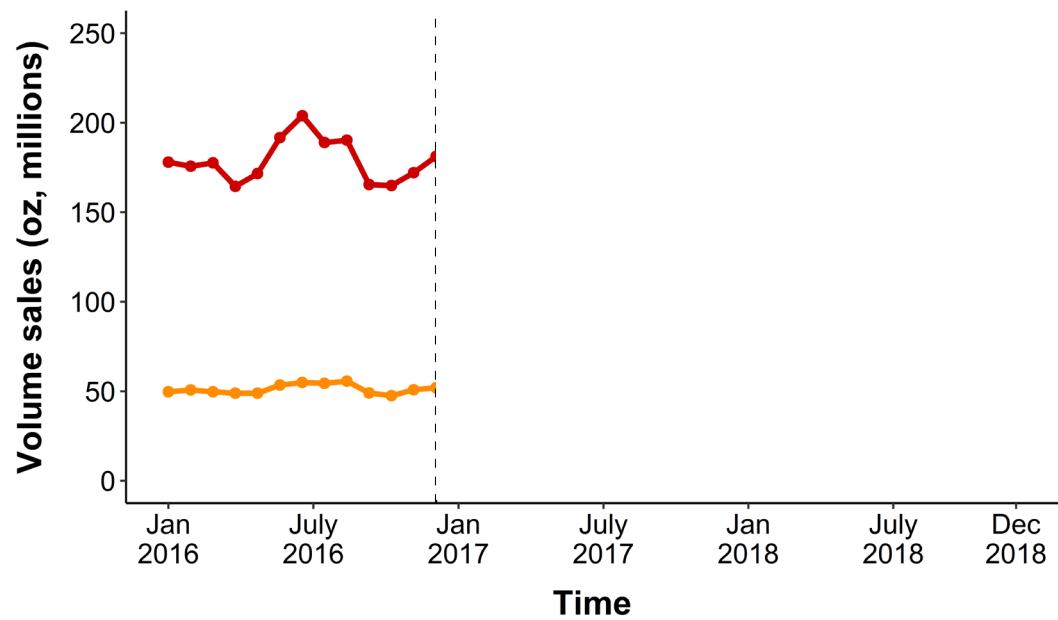
A photograph of Philadelphia City Hall, a large, ornate, light-colored stone building with a prominent clock tower and a central entrance. The building is set against a blue sky with white clouds. In the foreground, there are some green plants and a paved area with people walking.

Case Study: The Philadelphia Beverage Tax

1.5 cents-per-ounce on sugar and artificially
sweetened beverages

Implemented on January 1, 2017

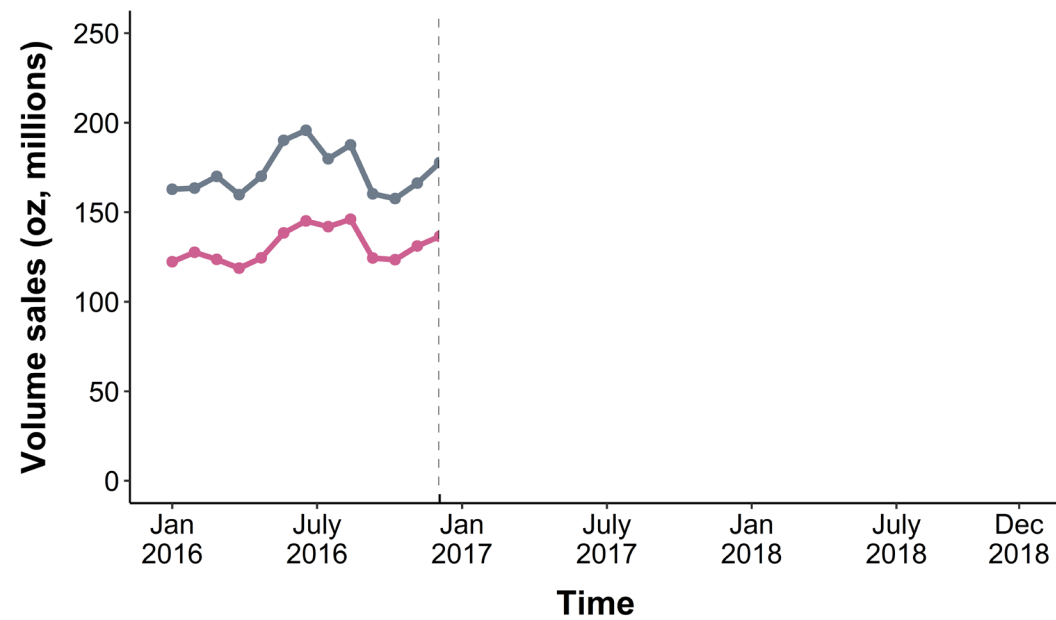
35% decline in Philadelphia volume sales



-50%

(CI: -61%, -36%)

Average volume sales change,
Philadelphia vs. Baltimore

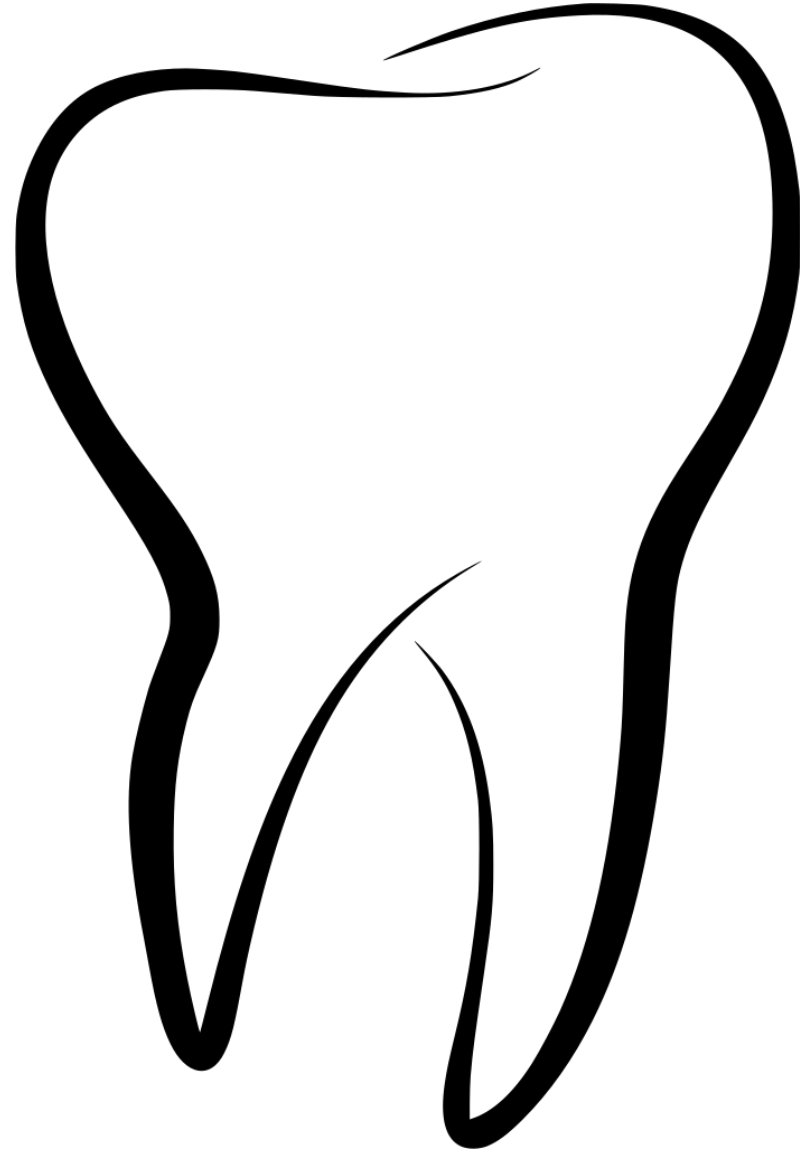


16%

(CI: 9%, 24%)

Average volume sales change,
PA border vs. MD border

The Philly tax was
associated with a
20% reduction in
dental cavities
among Medicaid
patients



Advocates needed to be armed with the facts



Sweetened Beverage Taxes Reduce Sugary Drink Purchases and Improve Health

By: Alyssa J. Moran, ScD, MPH;¹ Jim Krieger, MD, MPH;² and Christina A. Roberto, PhD¹

¹ Perelman School of Medicine, University of Pennsylvania; ² School of Public Health, University of Washington

EVIDENCE SUMMARY: As of August 2024, seven U.S. cities and dozens of countries have adopted sweetened beverage taxes. Although taxes vary in their design and delivery, clear evidence supports their positive effects on dietary behaviors and health. **Specifically, sweetened beverage taxes are associated with:**

- Reduced sugary drink purchases
- Reduced sugar intake
- Improvements in weight status across all age groups
- Improved oral health
- Improved pregnancy and birth outcomes

DIETARY BEHAVIORS

NEWS > POLITICS > ELECTION • News

Santa Cruz soda tax measure officially passes

Tax applies to soda distributors in the city



Stopping water shut offs in Philadelphia for people who can't afford to pay



REPORT

Authors:

Laura A. Gibson, PhD
Eliza Kinsey, PhD, Christina A. Roberto, PhD, &
Louise Russell, PhD
Perelman School of Medicine,
University of Pennsylvania

Appendix on Cost Estimates

Authors: George Miller, PhD, Corwin Rhyan, MPP
Altarum Institute

Maintaining scientific integrity is paramount

1

Stay true to your scientific values & explain them to your partners up front

2

Engage in open research practices for accountability like pre-registering analyses and data sharing

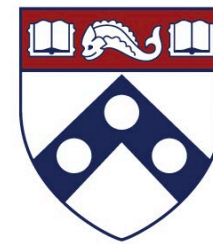
3

Work with other researchers who share your values around scientific rigor & can help keep the team accountable

4

Be willing to walk away from a project (don't succumb to sunk costs)

Thank you!
croberto@pennmedicine.upenn.edu



*Center for Food
and Nutrition Policy*

UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

Q&A

Thank you for attending!

THE RECORDING WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE IN THE
COMING DAYS.