

IADR divests sugar-sweetened beverage companies from investment portfolio

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The International Association for Dental Research (IADR) and its largest division, the American Association for Dental Research (AADR), have announced the divestment of sugar-sweetened beverage companies from their investment portfolios.

While IADR and AADR did not have direct investments in such companies, they've changed to investment managers who will screen out any holdings in the sector. The IADR and AADR already exclude any investments in tobacco companies.

Committing to the NCD response

The IADR was accepted as a Full Member of the NCD Alliance in October 2018 with the intent to better articulate the case for the inclusion of oral health in the fight against noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). IADR joined NCDA because oral diseases are one of the world's most prevalent NCDs, resulting in considerable health and economic burdens to populations, and share common risk factors (unhealthy diets high in free sugars, use of tobacco, and harmful consumption of alcohol) with the four main NCDs (cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, cancer and diabetes).

The evidence against sugar

The scientific evidence is clear that sugars are the most important dietary factor in the development of dental caries. Sugar-sweetened beverages are a major source of dietary sugars, lack nutritional value, and contribute not only to dental caries, but to unhealthy weight gain, obesity, and increased risk for diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Investing in companies that manufacture or distribute sugar-sweetened beverages or funds that have such holdings is inconsistent with the Missions of IADR and AADR, which are to advance research and increase knowledge for the improvement of oral health worldwide.

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"There is robust research that identifies free sugars as a major cause of dental caries and sugar-sweetened beverages are a major source of free sugars and are linked to a number of noncommunicable diseases," said AADR President Maria Emanuel Ryan. IADR President Rena D'Souza added, "the initiative to remove all investments in sugar-sweetened beverage companies matches IADR/AADR's previous divestment of tobacco stocks and more clearly embodies our investment philosophy and health-based values."

A wider Call for Action

The IADR, one of two oral health related non-governmental organisations in official relations with the World Health Organization, views the action as important to its fight against NCDs. The IADR and AADR call on other health-related professional associations with investment portfolios to adopt similar policies regarding sugar-sweetened beverage companies.

The IADR is a nonprofit organisation with over 11,400 individual members worldwide, dedicated to: (1) advancing research and increasing knowledge for the improvement of oral health worldwide, (2) supporting and representing the oral health research community, and (3) facilitating the communication and application of research findings.

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