

ECO: Industry-funded reviews query sweet drink, obesity tie

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(HealthDay)—Reviews that are funded by industry tend to find the evidence weak for a causal link between sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) and the increasing prevalence of obesity, while other reviews consider the evidence well founded, according to research presented at the annual meeting of the European Congress on Obesity, held from May 12 to 15 in Liverpool, U.K.

José Massougbojji, from Laval University in Quebec, and colleagues conducted a systematic search of reviews published from 2006 to 2011 and assessed the [methodological quality](#) of reviews relating to the role of SSBs on the increasing [prevalence of obesity](#). The authors' final position

was assessed on a scale of 0 (no evidence of causal relationship) to 5 (strong evidence of [causal relationship](#)).

Seventeen reviews were identified, of which four were funded by the food industry. The researchers found that there was no correlation between quality scores and the source of funding. Industry-funded reviews concluded that there was weak evidence supporting a causal link (mean position score, 1.78), while other reviews generally considered the evidence to be well founded (mean position score, 3.29).

"Results support the hypothesis of a master plan, based on subtle intervention, that has been developed by the food industry to instill doubt regarding the adverse effects of SSB and to prevent the implementation of [public health interventions](#) and policies aiming to reduce their consumption," a coauthor said in a statement.

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