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Sugar industry's use of dietitians to influence dental professionals, 1974-1978

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At the 97th General Session & Exhibition of the International Association for Dental Research (IADR), held in conjunction with the 48th Annual Meeting of the American Association for Dental Research (AADR) and the 43rd Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for Dental Research (CADR), Ifunanya Okeke, University of California, San Francisco, USA, gave an oral presentation on "Sugar Industry's Use of Dietitians to Influence Dental Professionals, 1974-1978." The IADR/AADR/CADR General Session & Exhibition is held at the Vancouver Convention Centre West Building in Vancouver, BC, Canada from June 19-22, 2019.

In 1975, the U.S. Sugar Association created the Regional Nutritional Information Program with the goal of enlisting dietitians to spread positive messages about sugar and health. This study describes the Regional Nutritional Information Program and its impact on dental professionals.

Internal U.S. Sugar Association documents related to operations, regulatory activities and scientific research from 1974 to 1978 were reviewed for relevance to the Regional Nutritional Information Program. Fifty-nine documents were identified for further review and emerging themes were identified.

The results show that the Regional Nutritional Information Program was an essential component of the U.S. Sugar Association's public relations campaign and was designed to portray the safety and benefits of sugar in

a balanced diet. The target audiences included universities, public schools, professional associations, and the media. U.S. Sugar Association dietitians hosted educational workshops, incorporated U.S. Sugar Association literature into libraries and curricula, monitored professional and consumer attitudes toward sugar and made media appearances. Their dietitians interacted with dental professionals by documenting their attitudes toward sugar, influencing a professional conference to include pro-sugar speakers, developing a media program that minimized sugar's role in tooth decay and by monitoring and criticizing dentist-researchers examining the high-sugar content of breakfast cereals.

The authors conclude that the U.S. Sugar Association used the Regional Nutritional Information Program to counter dentists' anti-sugar messages at professional meetings and in the media with positive messages about sugar and suggests that the public health community should consider corporate relationships in the dietetic profession as potentially detrimental to oral health.

More information: This oral presentation, #0270, was held on Wednesday, June 19, 2019 at 2:30 p.m. in Room 118 of the Vancouver Convention Centre West Building, Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Provided by International & American Associations for Dental Research

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