

Commercial Determinants of Health

How the economy and business influence our health for the better and the worse

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- Commercial determinants of health are a key social determinant, and refer to the conditions, actions and omissions by commercial actors that affect health. Commercial determinants arise in the context of the provision of goods or services for payment and include commercial activities, as well as the environment in which commerce takes place. They can have beneficial or detrimental impacts on health.
- Private sector activities that affect people's health, directly or indirectly, positively or negatively

Commercial actors can contribute positively to health and society, and many do, providing essential products and services. However, a substantial group of commercial actors are escalating avoidable levels of ill health, planetary damage, and inequity—the commercial determinants of health. While policy solutions are available, they are not currently being implemented, and the costs of harm caused by some products and practices are coming at a great cost to individuals and society.

Who is involved?

- Individuals
- Business
- State



- Litter Bug
- Carbon Footprint
- Climate Change
- Nanny State
- Individual Choice v Corporate Responsibility
- No need for regulation because of choice market forces

Whose slogans are these?

- Choosing has never been easier
- Have it your way
- Choosing health

- Everything begins with choice

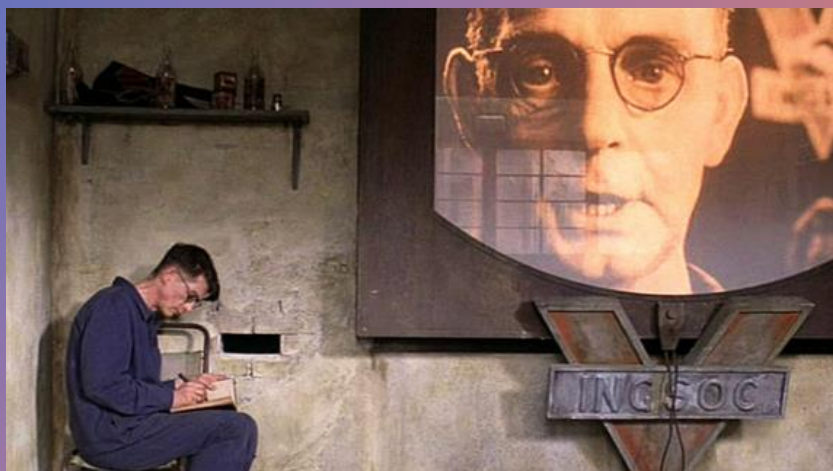
- No. Wrong. Choice is an illusion, created between those with power, and those without.

- Uncertainty
 - Global warming
 - Vaping
- Changing the product
 - Infant formula
 - Alcohol free beer, e.g. Olympic sponsorship
- Who is paying?
 - Commercial sponsorship
 - Independent bodies

- Smoking
 - Fossil fuels
 - Unhealthy food
 - Alcohol
 - Gambling
 - Pharmaceuticals
 - Infant feeding
 - Social media
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- Responsible for at least a third of global deaths each year



How to Sell 85%
Water and 13%
Sugar



1984

by George Orwell

Written on Jura

- Telescreens watch you while you watch them
- Who could tolerate that?
- How could people be persuaded to accept it?
- What if people could actually be persuaded to buy telescreens?
- Deep business?

Who stands to gain?

- Rich white men
- Poor black women

Approaches/strategies

- Modify behaviour change
- Regulation of markets

examples

- Least effective; take more exercise, eat less fat/salt; cook from scratch; consume 5 day; reduce sugar intake
- How products are manufactured, packaged and labelled; restrict flavourings that appeal to children in tobacco and alcohol products

Approaches/strategies

- Fiscal policies/Taxation, financial incentives and subsidies
- Citizen and consumer activism

Examples

- WHO best buy taxation on alcohol products; farming/agricultural subsidies; ending of subsidies to grow tobacco leaf and similar calls for sugar and palm oil
- Activists boycott products such as baby milk(nestle); child labour; buy with a social purpose Fairtrade products

Modify behaviour change

- Social prescribing
- Community support projects;
- Green partnerships
- Allotments

Fiscal

- MUP alcohol; farming subsidies; tax on cigarettes

Regulation

- Alcohol Licensing

NCD Alliance Scotland



- ▶ is a coalition of health organisations who are working together to reduce the health burden of non-communicable diseases [NCD Alliance Scotland](#)



What have the Capitalists ever done for us?



- Roads
- Sanitation
- Housing
- Medication
- Communication
- Technology
- Economic growth
- Efficiency
- Choice?

- Effective drug for management of obesity (generic semaglutide)
- Expensive and question of long-term impact
- Many wide-ranging alternative interventions already exist for the prevention and management of obesity
- There are commercial imperatives from manufacturers to promote the drug
- There are commercial imperatives from other industries to point to an individual medical solution for a wider problem which commercial interests have largely caused themselves

- Tobacco industry is still a huge commercial influence
- Industry needs alternatives to cigarettes
- Vaping can be effective in helping to quit smoking when used as an intervention
- Vaping is still consumption of addictive nicotine and has a market far wider than people who want to quit smoking
- Researchers and harm reduction bodies have funding from the tobacco industry

- The whisky industry is a commercial success for Scotland
- It combines a homespun image with international business efficiency
- Alcohol is one of the big causes of death and illness
- Few people are directly employed by the whiskey industry but its impact is wider for example in tourism
- It is superficially attractive to see benefits of joint working
- But what message does that send out for the Board?
- Acknowledging the importance of the alcohol industry is not the same as working with it

So what can we do?

- Recognise the existence and importance of commercial determinants of health
- Navigate around commercially generated norms and mirages of choice
- Ensure that alternative interventions and preventative options are considered
- Support appropriate levels of regulation and licensing
- Support community engaged entrepreneurs and a broad model of business including social enterprise

- Business has a huge influence over health and wellbeing
- It is not simply a question of personal responsibility
- Business interests can overwhelm genuine individual choice
- Businesses have a responsibility as a corporate citizen to improve health and wellbeing
- What is our corporate responsibility to work with business and other partners?