

You are almost done with in-class debates. Besides your assigned topic and position, what other topic interested you? What is your position on this topic and why? What would be a middle-ground solution/suggestion for this topic?

I believe the U.S. government could help fund healthcare through a soda (sugar sweetened) tax. By implementing a small tax on sodas and other sugary beverages such as lemonade, sweet iced tea, and fruit juices with added sugars, the government could support a revenue stream to make an impact on healthcare. According to an article published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, "Taxation has been proposed as a means of reducing the intake of these beverages and thereby lowering health care costs, as well as a means of generating revenue that governments can use for health programs." Currently, the average soda tax across 30 U.S. states is 5.2% which is too small to make a difference. By increasing the soda tax the U.S. government could earmark those funds to go towards healthcare specifically and the increased tax could help to curb consumption of such drinks based on the higher prices.

According to the aforementioned article, "Among 88,520 women in the Nurses' Health Study, the risk of coronary heart disease among women who consumed one serving of sugar-sweetened beverages per day, as compared with women who consumed less than one serving per month, was increased by 23%, and among those who consumed two servings or more per day, the risk was increased by 35%. Increased body weight explained some, but not all, of this association." There are numerous other studies around the world showing a positive correlation between intake of sugary beverages including soda and obesity, risk for diabetes, and other comorbidities. The goal of a sugar tax would be to decrease these risks by discouraging citizens to consume them so frequently.

A middle ground or solution for this hot topic is to gradually implement a tax on beverages that contain added sugar. This way, the tax would not jump up drastically at first, and it may have more traction to stick around. At the same time, by implementing education with the increased tax revenue, registered dietitians and other healthcare professionals can educate Americans about the moderation needed when consuming these drinks as well as the importance of physical activity. I enjoy soda every once in a while, but I am also educated about the potential consequences for over consumption of such items. Others may not think about these things as often as we foodies do, and that is where the education piece is crucial. I do not believe in a soda tax in order to eliminate these companies, but only to help educate Americans about nutrition and as a simple idea to increase healthcare revenue.

1. Brownell, K. (2009). The Public Health and Economic Benefits of Taxing Sugar-Sweetened Beverages. *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 361, 1599-1605. Retrieved December 11, 2014, from <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMhpr0905723>
2. Mandaro, L (2014). Nation's first soda tax is passed. USA Today.com. Retrieved December 11, 2014, from <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2014/11/05/berkeley-passes-soda-tax/18521923/>