NEWS

Tech

Science

Earth

Shop

Magazine

Entertainment & Arts

World News TV





ADVERTISEMENT

ADVERTISEMENT

Health

Row over sugar firms' links to scientists

By James Gallagher Health editor, BBC News website

() 12 February 2015 | Health

Are scientists in the palms of the sugar industry?

A row has erupted about links between the sugar industry and scientists who advise government on obesity.

Campaigners argue the scientists are so heavily influenced by companies that Dracula is now "in charge of the blood bank".

The scientists concerned say it is wrong to assume they are biased and critics should "learn proper science".

Public Health England said it welcomed industry "listening to our best scientists". The argument was sparked by a report on the issue in the British Medical

It claims Prof Susan Jebb - the government's obesity tsar, a University of Oxford academic and an expert in a recent three-part BBC documentary series on obesity has attracted more than £1.3m of industry funding.

This includes money from Coca-Cola, Unilever and Cereal Partners.

The article says members of a government advisory panel - the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition (SACN) - are supported by companies such as PepsiCo, Mars and Nestle.

It also claims that of the 40 scientists affiliated with SACN between 2001 and 2012, just 13 had no connections to the sugar industry. BMJ editor-in-chief Fiona Godlee said the investigation showed there was a

"network of relationships between key public health experts and the sugar

She said "these sorts of links create bias" and "weaken public health efforts to tackle the harmful effects of sugar on the diet".

Prof Simon Capewell, from the University of Liverpool and an adviser for the group

Dracula

health.

industry".

Journal.

Action on Sugar, told the BBC: "I was shocked, quite honestly; this is heartbreaking news and basically it appears a lot of people have been seriously misled." He said there would be an "inherent conflict of interest" between profits and public

"It's like putting Dracula in charge of the blood bank," he concluded. But that is an "insult", "fundamentally wrong" and shows a "need to learn some

proper science" according to Prof Ian MacDonald, who led a review of sugar guidelines last year.

The draft report, by SACN, said sugar added to food or naturally present in fruit juice and honey should account for 5% of energy intake - half the current recommendation.

He said the committee was clearly not biased as "that draft report is tougher on

sugar than the World Health Organization report is, or any other report is".

He told the BBC News website he was "not embarrassed" at advising industry, but acknowledged the general public was "very sceptical".

"We're world-respected scientists whose opinions are provided to government and to industry; and those people use that information as they see fit," he said.

'Makes sense'

Prof Jebb defended her record, telling the BBC: "As a scientist my independence

and personal credibility are crucial to me. Moreover, everything I do is aimed at improving public health."

She said there were times when it "makes good sense" to work with industry.

as an aid to weight loss. "If a company has genuine reason to believe their product or ingredient or

She cited one project funded by Coca-Cola that proved its product was ineffective

programme works then it seems appropriate to me that they should fund a trial to prove it, ideally conducted by independent scientists," she added. A spokesperson for SACN, in a statement issued through Public Health England,

said: "We welcome that industry is listening to our best scientists who can tell them what harm sugar is doing to the nation's health." Prof Jebb used to run the Medical Research Council's Human Nutrition Research

Dr Frances Rawle, the head of policy at the Medical Research Council, said: "We ensure that all research we fund is free of any influence from those with whom we collaborate, be they a charity or a commercial organisation.

independent scientific expertise. "Nutrition research is a good example because working with food and diet industry can help to directly translate high quality research into public health benefit."

"We actively encourage researchers to work with industry and, where it's

appropriate, we jointly fund many projects with industry partners or provide

Related Topics Obesity Medical research

unit.

Share this story About sharing

More on this story

Call to halve target for added sugar 26 June 2014 How much sugar do we eat?

26 June 2014 Water as only mealtime drink 'will combat child obesity'

26 June 2014

Related Internet links **Action on Sugar**

Prof lan Macdonald **Prof Susan Jebb**

The BBC is not responsible for the content of external Internet sites Health >





More Videos from the BBC



Recommended by Outbrain

Maaiid Nawaz warns of further attacks across Europe

Hydrogen-powered drone



Elsewhere on BBC



How do you bring up a baby gorilla?





Possible role in Myanmar

government for Aung San

Suu Kyi

UN court acquits Serb radical

Top Stories

Seselj

© 22 minutes ago

constitution

Casualties in Kolkata flyover collapse

O 25 minutes ago Court rules Zuma breached

(1) 13 minutes ago

CONNECTED KIDS How Generation Z will shape digital tech HUAWEI



monastery



Blunders in Brussels Has inquiry into attacks been hampered by a series of errors?



The Chinese company snapping up America's finest hotels



or less





I applied for a job in the US - and was

Trafficked to America

Football boots fury



Lionel Messi donation to charity causes outrage in Egypt

If you only read 6 things this week...

6 can't miss stories in your inbox every Friday

Subscribe today

Most Popular Watched 'Forced labour' at Qatar World

Cup site Court rules Zuma breached constitution Casualties in Kolkata flyover collapse

2

3

8

ADVERTISEMENT

FBI agrees to unlock another **iPhone**

5 UN court acquits Serb radical Seselj 6 Trump reverses on abortion amid outcry

Inside a hijack: The unheard stories of the Pan Am 73 crew

Nurse held in Italy for 13

murders US \$86m spy plane 'never used' 9

10 Outrage over Asia top model 'rant'

Customize CDN content with our EdgeRules **Learn How** maxcon

Recommended by Outbrain

campaign money

BBC News

New Zealand





BBC Autos EU referendum: Groups to pitch for The story behind China's 'Minecraft' military camo



Can quicksand really suck you to your

Get App Forget Downton -These Stately

From Around the Web



Promoted content by Outbrain

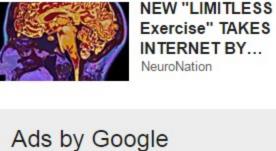
Where to Walk in the Footsteps of Europe's Most... Visit East Anglia

Bye Bye Skype - 8 Alternatives for the Modern Business



How to Work with the Data Infrastructure You... MarkLogic

Privacy: What's Really at Risk in



Huid Bleek Crème Geschikt voor alle Lichaamsdelen. Binnen 2-3 werkdagen Geleverd. skinlight.nl/Huid-Bleek-Crème

Bespaar tot 10% op uw energiekosten met de slimme Toon® thermostaat.

Do You Have A UK Pension?

Ontdek Toon® van Eneco

eneco.nl/Toon

Earth

Bitesize

TV

Get Your Pension Out of the UK & Avoid Losing 55%. Free Review! www.forthcapital.com/PensionAdvice

Black Power wedding photo goes viral in

Travel

Radio

Music

Contact BBC News

News Capital

BBC News Services

On your mobile

Culture **CBBC CBeebies** Make It Digital Arts

BBC Future

death?

Get news alerts

Autos

Food

Copyright © 2016 BBC. The BBC is not responsible for the content of external sites. Read about our approach to external linking.

On your connected tv

Nature Local Terms of Use About the BBC Privacy Policy Cookies Accessibility Help Parental Guidance Contact the BBC Advertise with us Ad choices

Future

iWonder