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Sugar

### Sugar: spinning a web of influence

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Public health scientists are involved with the food companies being blamed for the obesity crisis, reports **Jonathan Gornall** 

An investigation by The BMJ has uncovered evidence of the extraordinary extent to which key public health experts are involved with the sugar industry and related companies responsible for many of the products blamed for the obesity crisis through research grants, consultancy fees, and other forms of funding.

Tangled web: connections between the sugar industry and UK government advisory bodies. Links represent research funding, consultancy, and advisory board membership. Click here for interactive infographic

#### WILL STAHL-TIMMS

Among the main targets in the United Kingdom for an industry facing increasing pressure from government to reduce the health harms caused by its products are researchers working on nutrition issues for two key government funded organisations—the Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition and the Medical Research Council's Human Nutrition Research unit at Cambridge.

The BMJ has found that for more than a decade funding from industry has flowed to scientists involved with the research unit. Scientists working on Medical Research Council (MRC) projects have received research funding from organisations including Coca-Cola, PepsiCo, Nestlé, the Institute of Brewing and Distilling, Weight Watchers International, NutriLicious (a public relations firm specialising in conveying "nutrition and health messages" for the food industry), Sainsbury's, W K Kellogg Institute, and GlaxoSmithKline.

Others received consultancy fees from Boots, Coca-Cola, Cereal Partners UK, Mars, and Unilever Foods. They have also sat on advisory boards for Coca-Cola, the Food and Drink Federation, and the Institute of Grocery Distributors.

Figures obtained through freedom of information requests suggest industry funding of the work of scientists in the Human Nutrition Research unit alone may have averaged close to £250 000 (€330 000; \$380 000) a year for the past decade. Industry funding for the three years from 2010 to 2012 ...

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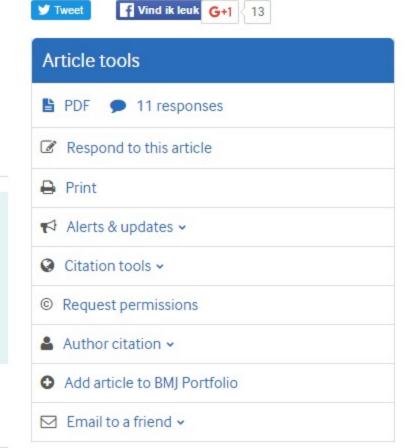
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