



SPECTRUM

SHAPING PUBLIC HEALTH POLICIES
TO REDUCE INEQUALITIES AND HARM

Introduction to SPECTRUM & the commercial determinants of health


Healthier & Fairer Futures Summit, 29th
September 2021

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Outline

- The current challenge – Non-Communicable Diseases and Covid-19
 - The commercial determinants of health – part of an upstream approach to addressing NCDs
 - Introduction to SPECTRUM
 - Examples of our recent work
 - Opportunities within the current context
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Non-communicable diseases & Covid-19



Non-Communicable Diseases and Covid-19

- NCDs – primarily cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes account for almost nine in ten deaths in the UK and 70% globally
- People living with NCDs are at increased risk of Covid-19 disease severity and mortality
- Efforts to address the pandemic have caused significant disruption to services. This will have exacerbated the NCD burden.
- There is not only an NHS backlog for diagnosis, treatment and management of NCDs – there is also a **public health backlog**, with key **health improvement** services paused and important **population level policies** delayed or not introduced
- As we look ahead we need to do three things: continue to deal with the pandemic in the UK, restart and strengthen efforts to address NCDs (including the ‘upstream’ determinants that are the focus of this summit) and contribute to efforts globally to address Covid-19 and recovery.

The commercial determinants of health



Definition

“Strategies and approaches used by the private sector to promote products and choices that are detrimental to health” (Kickbusch et al, 2016)

- Operates at different levels and is relevant locally, regionally, nationally and internationally
- Includes consumer and health behaviour (with unhealthy commodity producers often emphasising individual choices) and at a wider level issues around globalisation and the global consumer society
- Research and practice on the commercial determinants of health aims to address the drivers and channels through which corporations propagate the non-communicable diseases pandemic

Rationale for research with a commercial determinants focus

- Policy interventions that operate at the population level (for example those aiming to address the price, promotion, availability or content of unhealthy commodities) have not been adequately examined in terms of their system-level impacts on markets; producers; social practices and institutions
- Evidence is just one factor that influences policy change – political & public support also necessary
- Unhealthy commodity producers often delay or derail effective public health policies and practices

Introduction to SPECTRUM



UK Centre for
Tobacco Control Studies

A UKCRC Public Health Research Centre of Excellence



UKCTAS

UK Centre for Tobacco & Alcohol Studies



SPECTRUM

Shaping public health policies
to reduce inequalities & harm

Vision

To conduct innovative research that transforms understanding of the commercial drivers and systems that cause NCDs, and to translate findings into prevention policy and practice

Aims

- investigate the conduct and influence of unhealthy commodity producers in driving consumption
- build understanding of the systems that perpetuate those drivers, and
- apply systems science to prioritise political, social and other measures to prevent harm to health and reduce the health gradient.

Who is involved?



Our Partners

Alliances



Public Health Agencies



Companies





WP 1 | SYSTEMS SCIENCE

We will develop methods to apply a complex systems perspective to public health problems in the context of Unhealthy Commodity Producers (UCPs). We will identify potential areas for future intervention and develop an understanding of the ways that under-researched sub-systems may interfere with the effectiveness of interventions.



WP 2 | CORPORATE CONDUCT

By developing a model of the commercial determinants of health and compiling evidence of the best practice in using research to enable policy change, we will advance our understanding of Unhealthy Commodity Producers' (UCPs) influence on health and public policy, and how this can most effectively be addressed to improve public health.



WP 3 | NEW DATA

We will develop and integrate responsive novel data sources to inform, refine and evaluate systems-level interventions. This includes expanding the Smoking and Alcohol Toolkit Study across Great Britain. These new data will provide insights into population-wide influences on smoking, smoking cessation and alcohol reduction and enable the evaluation of natural experiments.



WP 4 | ECONOMIC ANALYSES

We will develop economic and health impact analysis and modelling on wider system effects of unhealthy commodities and prevention policies in the UK, including evidence of the impact of alcohol and tobacco on outcomes beyond health, such as work productivity and employment. Modelling will cover relevant economic sectors, supply chains, and growth in other sectors.



WP 5 | SHAPING THE ENVIRONMENT

By examining the intended and unintended impacts of (and interventions in) the local commercial environment on the consumption of unhealthy commodities, we will assess how, where and when people are subjected to unhealthy commodity environments. We will develop the evidence base linking the interaction of availability, price and marketing with purchasing, consumption and health outcomes.



WP 6 | EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICIES

We will evaluate policies designed to reduce consumption of unhealthy commodities by investigating effects on product diversity, price and consumption. Our analyses will also identify strategies used to circumvent advertising restrictions, potential inadequacies of existing regulatory approaches such as media imagery, and evaluate the implementation of tobacco and alcohol treatment in the NHS.



WP 7 | MENTAL HEALTH INEQUALITIES

Using a nationally representative UK survey and working with people with mental ill-health, we will build understanding of links between unhealthy commodity use, mental ill-health and stigma. We will examine how unhealthy product marketing, and tobacco and alcohol mass media campaigns impact on those with mental ill-health, and develop new messaging to meet their needs.



WP 8 | GOVERNANCE & HEALTH EQUITY

We will examine how health governance can be improved to develop coherent approaches to tackling the commercial determinants of health, including via increasing accountability in policy interactions with unhealthy commodity producers and managing conflict of interest. Using participatory approaches, we will explore how to promote the legitimacy and acceptability of policy innovation in NCD prevention.

Examples of recent work

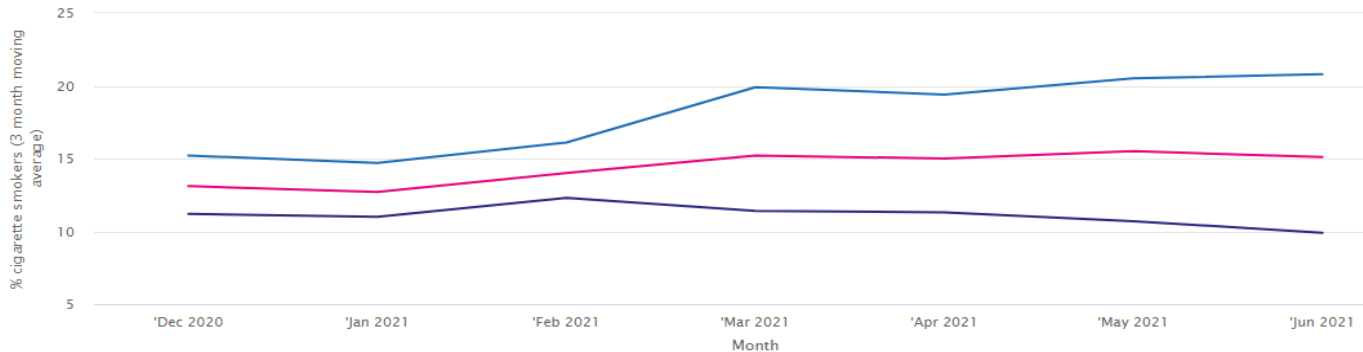
Further detail to follow on research from academic teams within the Consortium from Professors Gilmore & Peticrew

December 2020 to June 2021 (www.smoking)

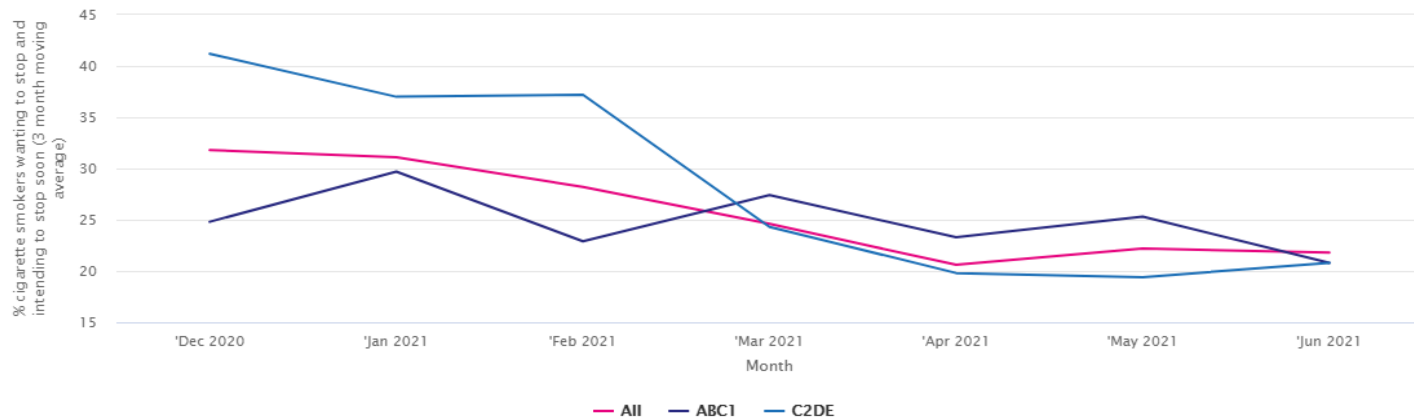


Smoking in
Scotland

Cigarette smoking prevalence



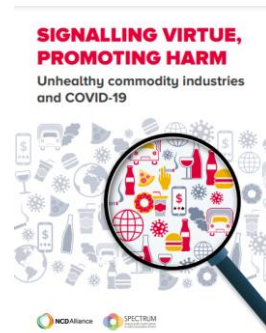
Motivation to quit



Extension of Smoking
Toolkit Study to Scotland
(and Wales)
As part of SPECTRUM
consortium

Signalling Virtue, Promoting Harm: Unhealthy commodity industries and COVID-19

- Highlights 4 main strategies adopted by producers of alcohol, fossil fuels, infant formula, tobacco and ultra-processed food and drinks
 - Pandemic-tailored marketing campaigns
 - Corporate social responsibility programmes
 - Shaping policy environments
 - Fostering partnerships with governments, international agencies and NGOs
- 786 online submissions of activities in >90 countries incl the UK. Published Sept 2020



NEWS

Check for updates

London

Cite this as: [BMJ 2020;370:m2548](#)
<https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.m2548>
Published: 10 September 2020

Covid-19: Food and drink companies are exploiting pandemic to further their brands, analysis finds

Matthew Limb

"Unhealthy" commodity companies around the world are using the covid-19 pandemic for commercial gain in ways that could fuel future disease epidemics, a report has concluded.

Firms trading in alcohol, tobacco, junk foods, gambling, infant milk formula, and fossil fuels are "leveraging" the coronavirus crisis to burnish their brands, build influence, and advance their strategic interests, often to the detriment of wider public health and sustainability goals, shows the research from the NCD Alliance and a multi-university and multi-agency consortium of researchers known as SPECTRUM, based at Edinburgh University, that focuses on the commercial determinants of health and health inequalities.

The authors have called for a tough response from governments and regulators and warned of a "corporate capture of covid 19" with firms using public awareness and fears concerning the pandemic to ward off or weaken regulation and shape tax policies to their advantage.

Lucy Westerman, the NCD Alliance's policy and campaigns manager, said, "There is an irony that companies whose products increase the risk of non-communicable diseases, putting people at higher risk of suffering through the pandemic, have positioned themselves as heroes and partners in the response but have interfered in public policies that seek to protect population health."

Linda Bauld, a professor of public health at Edinburgh University and head of SPECTRUM, said that companies were constantly adapting their engagement with covid-19 and that the findings should be seen as the "tip of the iceberg."

Jeff Gillin, co-investigator and professor of global health policy at Edinburgh University, said, "Alcohol and ultra-processed food companies in particular are desperate to present themselves as partners in global health and development rather than as key drivers of NCD [non-communicable disease] epidemics. And they're extensively working to exploit opportunities arising from the pandemic to promote that framing—one that has worrying potential to shape policy agendas across national and international levels."

In the crowdsourced project the researchers analysed companies' activity over 10 weeks, from early May to mid-July this year, in 94 countries. They amassed 786 submissions, in which the most frequently cited countries were the UK and the US (159 submissions each), followed by Australia, India, Mexico, Brazil, and Jamaica (Dowd).

The Telegraph Coronavirus News Politics Sport Business Money Opinion Tech Life

UK news World news Royals Health Defence Science Education Environment

Revealed: how junk food and alcohol brands turned Covid-19 into the world's largest marketing campaign

Major producers of unhealthy food and drink used the pandemic to promote their products at the expense of public health, the report claims

By Jordan Kelly-Linden
10 September 2020 • 6:04am

Healthy Weight Strategy (published yesterday)

Turning the Tide



- Two year project led by SPECTRUM's partner the Obesity Health Alliance
- SPECTRUM researchers led the evidence reviews that informed the strategy
- Sets out a ten year plan with 30 recommendations for change (focused on England but relevant to the devolved nations)


This project was made possible with funding from the British Heart Foundation, Cancer Research UK, the Health Foundation and the Wellcome Trust. The academic project team is part of the SPECTRUM Consortium that is funded by the UK Prevention Research Partnership (grant MR/S037519/1).



Opportunities within the current context

Recent developments that could present opportunities

- Individual Level:

- Better understanding of public health within the population
 - Improvements in health literacy (likely among some groups not others)
 - Engagement with testing and key elements of a public health system
 - Possible opportunities to connect with many more groups on public health issues via a mixture of digital online/platforms and traditional methods of engagement
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Recent developments that could present opportunities (plus possible barriers)

- Population level:
 - Collective efforts (volunteering, community engagement, participation in the vaccine programme)
 - Extensive state intervention in human behaviour for health protection
 - Does this mean we will be more accepting of population level policy interventions to improve health?
 - Or does it mean that we will be less tolerant of ongoing intervention and want the state to step back?
 - Will economic priorities including fewer constraints on unhealthy commodity producers actually undermine public health in the months/years to come?

Knowledge Exchange 3-day Workshops - Norton House Hotel, Edinburgh www.spectrum.ac.uk

- **Nicotine & Tobacco: Tues 23rd – Thurs 25th November**

- Topics: policy developments overview; latest trends in e-cigarette & tobacco use; health effects; e-cigs and young people; specific population groups (pregnancy, homeless, mental health); treatment approaches; availability evidence; mass media health promotion & mass media advertising; industry tactics.

- **Alcohol Policy in Practice: Mon 29th November - Weds 1st Dec**

- Topics: alcohol policy overview; inequalities in alcohol-related harms; monitoring & measuring consumption; consumption, harms & policies during COVID-19 & future policy implications; availability & licensing – local & national approaches; alcohol marketing via different channels & corporate activity; advocacy techniques training.



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Thank you – Linda.Bauld@ed.ac.uk
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NCD Alliance



the
POVERTY
ALLIANCE

WORKING TOGETHER TO COMBAT POVERTY

