

Study findings help Western Australians live lighter

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Partner organisations: Cancer Council Western Australia, Cancer Council Victoria

The challenge

Overweight and obesity pose a considerable health and financial burden on all Australians.

Mass media campaigns have been recommended as one tool to help address the problem of obesity, and several campaigns have been funded by federal and state governments in Australia.

These campaigns have resulted in increased public knowledge about issues related to overweight and obesity. However, the cost-effectiveness of these mass media campaigns has not yet been established.

Our response

To assess the cost-effectiveness of Cancer Council Western Australia(WA)'s LiveLighter® campaign a project team from Deakin Health Economics at the Institute for Health Transformation sought to determine not only how the campaign impacts attitudes, but also dietary consumption.

To do this, Cancer Council WA surveyed the same group of people to ask about their dietary behaviours before and after two LiveLighter campaigns. The project team then completed a meta-analysis of this information to understand whether the campaign affected people's consumption of sugary drinks and sweet foods (e.g. cakes, biscuits, lollies).

The project team worked closely with Cancer Council WA to estimate the cost of delivering a LiveLighter campaign over one year.

The team then used this information and the ACE-Obesity Policy model to determine the long-term impacts and healthcare cost savings associated with the reduced consumption of sugary drinks and sweet foods.



The results

The cost of delivering the LiveLighter campaign over one year was found to be \$2.46M.

The meta-analysis of the cohort study found that the LiveLighter campaign encouraged people to reduce their consumption of unhealthy foods by 0.78 serves each week for sugary drinks and 0.28 serves each week for sweet foods. This reduction in consumption of these unhealthy foods was estimated to result in \$3.17M in lifetime healthcare cost savings.

In a nutshell, the cost of delivering the LiveLighter campaign is offset by the healthcare cost savings.

The impact

This Australian-first evaluation attracted media attention and was featured in [The West Australian](#) and [Business News](#).

The study findings were commended by Terry Slevin, CEO of the Public Health Association of Australia.

'This report is timely and confirms that ongoing funding for mass media campaigns aimed to encourage healthy behaviours should be included as a key intervention of a multi-component obesity prevention strategy.'

Having made the economic case for investment in mass media campaigns to improve population diets, the WA Government announced \$16 million for continued campaign funding for 5 years. This decision will likely lead to Western Australians continuing to enjoy healthier diets.

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