

EDITOR'S CHOICE

INDIA EDITOR'S CHOICE

Dunk that cola

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The “God” takes guard for the last time this week, and cricket will never be the same again. As India gets ready to bid adieu to its “Little Master” Sachin Tendulkar, the emotional outpouring reinforces the impression that cricketers make on the minds of young and older people alike.

Commercial endorsements by cricketers are a tricky terrain to navigate. Earlier this year, teams in the Indian Premier League were pulled up for promotion of alcohol brands in contravention of national advertising rules (doi:10.1136/bmj.f3303). As Monika Arora, senior director of HRIDAY (Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth) explains, “. . . associating alcohol with cricket in any form would promote alcohol use among Indians, especially [young people] who are at an impressionable age. Such direct advertising also sends out a message that alcohol use is an acceptable societal norm as famous cricketers are seen to be endorsing that alcohol brand.”

I wonder what might be said about promotion of soft drinks by cricketers though. Easily one of the largest sponsors for cricket in the country, the soft drinks industry has grown unchecked. In the latest *BMJ* poll on regulation of India's soft drinks industry, an overwhelming majority concur: not enough is being done. Ruling on a petition to regulate misleading advertising of soft drinks, particularly those targeted at children, the Supreme Court directed the Food and Safety Standards Authority of India to ensure greater enforcement of regulations in the larger interest of “protection of human life and health” (doi:10.1136/bmj.f6519).

Indeed, in an article that grabbed attention worldwide, Aseem Malhotra calls for us to train the guns on sugar in foods and beverages as it quickly emerges as an independent risk factor for the metabolic syndrome (doi:10.1136/bmj.f6340). For too long, he argues, saturated fat has been vilified for its role in cardiovascular diseases, leading to unnecessary treatment and

unsubstantiated dietary advice. There was cause for a mini-celebration at the *BMJ* as this was one of two scholarly articles from the *BMJ* in the Altmetric High Five list of newsworthy papers for October across publishers.

Speaking of saturated fat, palm oil has grown to be the dominant cooking oil consumed by low and middle income populations. Exploring the role of food taxes on consumption and health, Sanjay Basu and colleagues use mathematical modelling and find that a 20% tax on palm oil purchases in India would substantially reduce cardiovascular deaths over a 10 year period if it were not replaced by other oils (doi:10.1136/bmj.f6048). Given that the success of palm oil lies in its relatively low price, a tax would likely exacerbate food insecurity, however. In a linked editorial (doi:10.1136/bmj.f6065), Bhavani Shankar and Corina Hawkes draw attention to the popularity of palm oil among manufacturers of processed foods as well. While taxation may alter consumption by this industry, they suggest one must be wary of a switch to another source of unhealthy fats—trans fats. Indeed, the US Food and Drug Administration recently determined that partially hydrogenated oils, the primary source of artificial trans fats in processed foods, may not be safe. Once finalised, new guidelines will make it more difficult for manufacturers to include trans fats in processed foods (doi:10.1136/bmj.f6749).

As you sit back and watch Tendulkar blazing (fingers crossed) in his last match, I encourage you to chuck the cola and crisps, and go for a plate of fruit instead (doi:10.1136/bmj.f5001).

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