

The commercial determinants of health

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Purpose

- Definition(s)
- Framing
- Governance of relationships
- Personal reflections on ways forward

Context

- Neglected in Government policy and models of health such as the SDoH
- Under appreciated and undervalued - hugely important determinant of health - lack of overall policy coherence
- Siloed approach - broader approach not in the public or policy parlance
- No consensus-based touchstone definition - urgent need for a pragmatic definition that has real traction for the development of public policy
- Increasing academic interest
- Health Foundation project

Definitions

- Definitions to date in the academic literature have been focused on the commercial determinants of DISEASE
- The potential of commerce to create or produce health is typically not included in any current candidate definitions in the literature. Salutogenic definitions about the commercial determinants of HEALTH not explored
- There is no perfect definition and such a definition will likely always be essentially contested
- There is a need for greater specificity and “future proofing” a definition so that it can resist challenge
- A clear conceptualisation can help with developing effective policy responses - Kickbusch Lancet 2016

Some Definitions

- Nicolas Freudenberg (2012):*
- “Corporate practices are a dominant influence on the lifestyles that shape patterns of health and disease. Modifying business practices that promote unhealthy lifestyles is a promising strategy for improving population health. Corporations shape lifestyles by producing and promoting healthy or unhealthy products, creating psychological desires and fears, providing health information, influencing social and physical environments, and advancing policies that favor their business goals. Public officials and health professionals can promote health by advocating policies to modify these corporate practices.”
- The manufacture of lifestyle: The role of corporations in unhealthy living. Journal of Public Health Policy 2012:33(2)

Definitions

- Factors that influence health that stem from the profit motive - West and Marteau
- Strategies and approaches used by the private sector to promote products and choices that are detrimental to health - Iona Kickbusch 2016 Lancet

Framing

- 1. Wider Social Determinant
- 2. Cause of NCD's - Unhealthy commodity industries
- 3. Political and economic landscape - neo-liberal paradigm
- 4. Cause of market failure - negative externalities
- 5. Economic development - health creating economy
- 6. Corporate power - influence on political , information, legal environments
- 7. Human, social and political rights and freedoms
- 8. Complex system approach

The 4 P's of commodity marketing

- The ideal is a strategic approach to tackling the 4 P's of commodity marketing not an incremental approach
- The common thread of tackling NCD commodity disease vectors is through the supply and demand market intervention and regulatory measures
- WHO and OHA, AHA, SFTA etc best buys for the prevention of NCD's
- NCD's shared aetiologies and pathologies

Governance of relationships between the public and private sector

- Industry and commerce are heterogenous
- Keep policy, strategy, research development completely free from vested interests of unhealthy commodity industries
- Involve in implementation of agreed public policy goals as appropriate
- Utilise principles of engagement such as PHE guidelines to avoid conflicts of interest

Ways forward

- Clear conceptualisation - particularly the common strands linked by the commercial marketing paradigm
- Develop monitoring and surveillance systems - industry observatory
- Increase civil service literacy and non-ideological framing
- Develop and work with the third sector and public interest alliances
- Sustainable prosperity - Health creating not damaging economy approach and health is the main driver for environmental action - Wales and New Zealand approaches