
Letter to the Editor

World Championship 2006 in Germany: sponsorship through Coca Cola, McDonald's, Anheuser-Busch

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In contrast to Formula One Car Racing events, public health experts could be satisfied that there was no advertisement of tobacco products at the Soccer World Cup in Germany this year (although smoking is allowed at the events!). However, we should not be complacent while we enjoy the games and the many fascinating multicultural events surrounding them. Sponsorship of the World Cup through companies that produce not exceptionally healthy—to say the least—food products such as beer and particularly fast food and soft drinks containing high concentrations of sugar (Anheuser-Busch, McDonald's, Coca Cola) is a breathtaking example of a scandalous misuse of this event by national and multinational industries.

Unhealthy lifestyles including the consumption of fast food and alcohol are well documented major risk factors for disease burdens of all populations according to the World Health Report.¹ The currently ongoing and increasing epidemic of diabetes in the world, for example, is partly caused by changes of eating habits and the increasing consumption of fast food

products.² Thus, it is in my opinion absolutely irresponsible and should be illegal that a substantial amount of the world population watches the games with the permanent exposure to unhealthy food products.

From a public health point of view it is important not to narrow the focus to smoking, but to include other relevant risk factors in a ban for advertisements and to change the respective laws for sponsorships accordingly. Sadly, we definitely missed a great opportunity to promote public health on a worldwide scale during the exciting weeks of the Soccer World Cup in Germany.

References

- 1 World Health Organization. World Health Report 2002—Reducing Risks, Promoting Healthy Life. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2002.
- 2 Zimmet P. The burden of type 2 diabetes. Are we doing enough? *Diabetes Metab* 2003;29:6S9–18.

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