
RETHINK YOUR DRINK @ WESTMEAD HOSPITAL

Summary of key findings March – June 2017

Background & Introduction

Preventing overweight and obesity is a complex issue requiring multiple strategies and a long term approach. Making healthy drinks normal in our health facilities is one contributing intervention. This aligns to encouraging people to make healthier choices by creating an environment that makes the healthier choice an easier choice by reducing availability of Sugar Sweetened Beverages (SSBs). SSBs are a major source of added sugar intake with no nutritional value. They increase the risk of chronic diseases such as cardiovascular disease, diabetes, some cancers and obesity (Australian National Preventative Health Agency, 2014). Addressing the harmful risk factor of SSBs will improve lifestyles for our population. As the first Sydney Hospital to implement this initiative, the trial provided an opportunity for Westmead Hospital to be a leader in obesity prevention, reinforcing the message that good health starts in our own “backyard”.

The aim of the *Rethink Your Drink* trial at Westmead Hospital was to increase awareness of the consequences from over consumption of SSBs, reduce SSB availability in hospitality outlets and vending machines at Westmead Hospital and encourage people to make healthier drink choices. Between March and June 2017, SSBs were removed from sale in all food retail outlets across Westmead Hospital.

Method

Removal of SSB from sale

On the 1st of March 2017, food retailers removed the SSB from sale in all vending machines and food outlets across Westmead Hospital. This included the Zouki food outlets and cafes, newsagency, and volunteer trolleys. All food retailers were provided with a list of alternative drinks that could be sold during this time.

Partnership & stakeholder engagement

The project involved extensive stakeholder collaboration, multiple level approaches including a comprehensive communications and marketing strategy. The unique partnership involved the WSLHD Centre for Population Health, hospitality/vending retailers (Zouki Group of Companies and Coca Cola Amatil), Westmead Corporate Services, WSLHD Corporate Communications and WSLHD Procurement services.

Communications strategy

A pre-communications strategy was rolled out one month prior to raise awareness and inform those attending Westmead Hospital – staff, volunteers, patients, visitors, etc. about the removal of sugary drinks from sale in March 2017.

Throughout the pilot, feedback was sort via broadcasts, emails and consumer survey engaging all stakeholders and encouraging shared ownership in the trial. Staff Frequently Asked Questions information sheets were developed and updated to address general themes identified from feedback. This unique communications strategy led to identification of ambassadors (clinical/non-

clinical staff) who became involved in the internal and external communications strategy. Local case studies reinforced key health messages, highlighting Westmead as a benchmark health facility for making healthy drinks normal.

Data collection and analysis

Qualitative and quantitative data was used to examine the project impacts of a three month introductory phase. At mid-point of the trial, a staff, volunteers, visitors and patients attending Westmead Hospital were invited to participate in a consumer survey (paper-based or online). Qualitative data from this provided insights into staff, volunteers and visitor attitudes and perceptions about SSBs removal and any change in consumption behaviour. Time comparison sales data provided information about the impact of the trial on revenue and sales.

Results

Consumer survey

A total of 728 consumer surveys were completed by staff (clinical/non clinical), volunteers, visitors, students, contractors, patients, etc. in April 2017. Results from the survey indicated a majority strong support for the removal of SSB sales from hospitals (Figure 1). During the trial period, 44% of respondents indicated an increase in water consumption since the trial commenced and 10% reported a reduction in soft drink consumption.

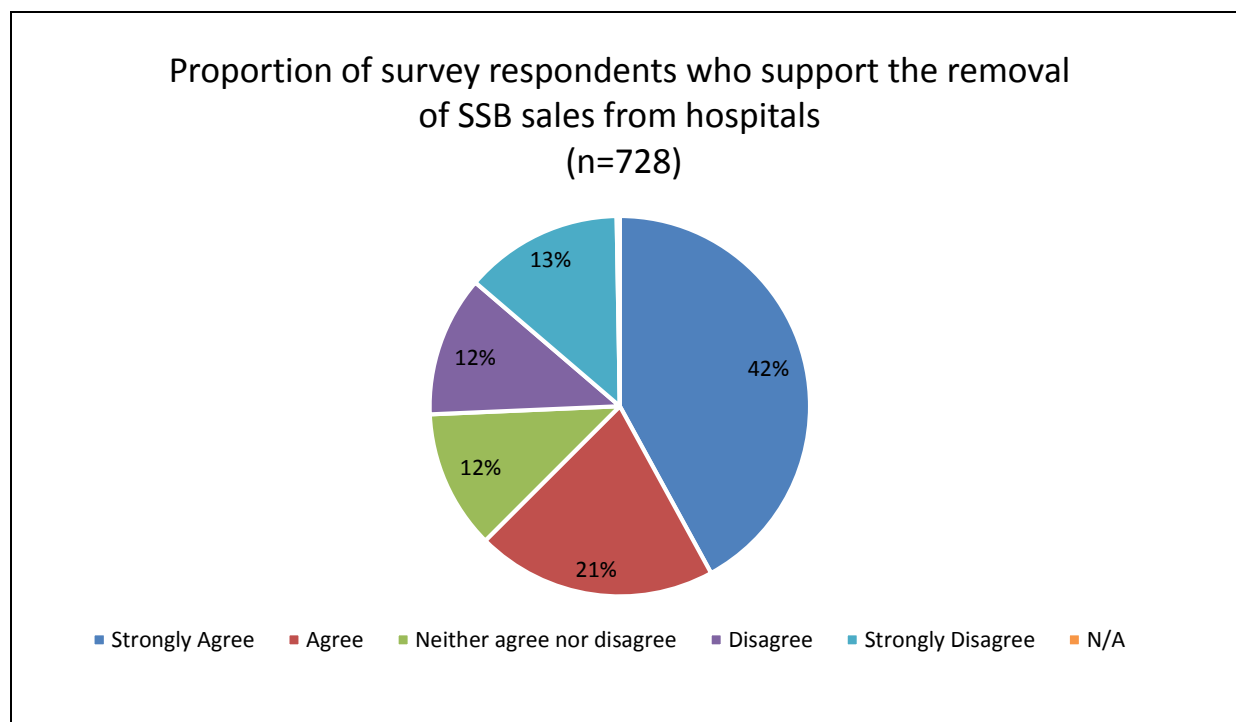


Figure 1: Proportion of survey respondents who support the initiative

Feedback from staff

Qualitative feedback from staff (via email) showed that attitudes and perceptions about reducing SSBs availability in the hospital were mostly positive (Table 1). Some staff also reported making positive changes in their own homes as a result of the trial.



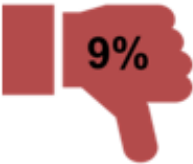

	<p>Total of 92 emails were received from staff</p>
	<p>Positive feedback The main themes state that the trial is important because this health facility should be role modelling healthy lifestyle behaviours.</p>
	<p>Negative feedback The main theme is that their choice has been taken away.</p>
	<p>Neutral feedback Main theme was the query - why aren't all sugary drinks included and the need for availability of free tap water.</p>

Table 1: Overview of e-mail feedback from staff

Sales data

Overall, there was a minimal loss in revenue from the sale of drinks. However, sales data indicate an increase in the number of healthier drinks sold in non-vending outlets. Mean values of water units sold showed an increase in trend (7.6%) between March-May 2016 (M=4447.67) and in the same time period in 2017 (M=4962.33). This is consistent with the key message of making water the preferred drink of choice.

Conclusion

The Rethink Your Drink trial has demonstrated that removing SSB from sale in health facilities is an important step for the health district in role-modelling positive health behaviours, and being a leader in obesity prevention. Having strong leadership and commitment from all stakeholders and partners was a critical component. The food and vending retailers' involvement has led to changes in their promotion of healthier choices and engagement with the healthy food and drink movement within the hospital. The retailers demonstrated a commitment to align themselves with a healthier message. Furthermore, the strong communication strategy focused around engaging staff as ambassadors was an efficient way for health promotion to reach a larger audience because staff provided role-modelling and advocacy relating to healthy lifestyle behaviours. The success of this strategy resulted in the Ministry of Health using the findings to inform the new framework for healthy choices in health facilities across NSW, where removing SSB from sale is one of the multiple strategies to reduce overweight and obesity. WSLHD will adopt the recommendations and findings from the trial to ensure a seamless process in the removal of SSB from sale across the health district.