



Effective Health Care

Sodium Lowering Policies

Nomination Summary Document

Results of Topic Selection Process & Next Steps

- Sodium lowering policies does not fit within the domain of the Effective Health Care (EHC) Program because it represents a governmental policy and not a clinical drug, intervention, device, or technology. No further activity will be undertaken on this topic.

Topic Description

Nominator: Individual

Nomination Summary: The nominator is interested in the comparative effectiveness of sodium lowering policies enacted by the government versus the usual standard of care for the reduction of hypertension and overall cardiovascular disease in the U.S. He is interested in government policy and regulation that would, for example, lower the sodium content in restaurant and processed foods. The nominator states that it is well established that high sodium consumption increases hypertension and cardiovascular disease and regulatory approaches have been proposed to lower overall population sodium consumption. The nominator states that the United Kingdom has taken this approach and has made it a top public health priority. He asserts that regulatory policies would prevent disease and benefit the population as a whole, especially people over the age of 50, African Americans, and low income populations who are more likely to be exposed to high-sodium diets. He also mentions that the Center for Science in the Public Interest has worked to convince the U.S. FDA to remove sodium's designation as safe and take other actions to reduce sodium levels in the food supply. Lastly, the nominator states that a scientific study objectively evaluating the benefits, risks, and costs of regulatory action might encourage regulatory agencies to act on this matter.

Key Questions from Nominator: None

Considerations

- The topic does not meet EHC Program appropriateness criteria. (For more information, see <http://effectivehealthcare.ahrq.gov/index.cfm/submit-a-suggestion-for-research/how-are-research-topics-chosen/>.)

- There are ongoing efforts by the U.S. FDA, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Institute of Medicine (IOM) related to this topic. The U.S. FDA is currently considering a petition brought forth by the Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) to alter the regulatory status of salt and enforce food labeling provisions. The IOM has convened a consensus committee to consider and report on potential policy options for sodium reduction in the U.S. Lastly, the CDC's National Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program has announced several proposed priority actions for 2008-2009. The National Forum will move forward with a number of activities based on these priorities. In addition, the National Forum will explore ways to address selected policy issues and the impact of sodium intake on cardiovascular disease.
 - IOM Strategies to Reduce Sodium Intake. Accessed on August 13, 2009. Available at: <http://www.iom.edu/?id=59128>
 - CSPI efforts on sodium regulation. Accessed on August 13, 2009. Available at: <http://www.cspinet.org/salt/>
 - National Heart Disease and Stroke Prevention Program. Accessed on August 13, 2009. Available at: http://www.cdc.gov/dhdsp/state_program/index.htm
- Full evaluation of this topic would require further examination of the economic impact on food manufacturers and other sectors beyond health care. Current guidance for research methods in the EHC Program has not defined methods suitable for the type of comparison that this topic warrants. At this time, current comparative effectiveness review guidance and practice does not have a set of methods to address and systematically review this type of topic.