

Healthcare Spending In America

Issue

Due to the complexity of health concerns stemming directly from cultural norms of unhealthy lifestyles, “The US obesity prevalence was 41.9% in 2017- March 2020” emphasized by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2022). The cultural norm of unhealthy lifestyles is a direct effect of much too lenient food regulations the Food and Drug Administration has in place for additives in food. The FDA states, “Generally Recognized as Safe Ingredients are those that are generally recognized by experts as safe, based on their extensive history of use in food before 1958... Manufacturers may also request that FDA review the industry's determination of GRAS Status.” (2010), displaying the lack of urgency to review food safety status unless someone specifically requests they do so. The CDC explains, “The estimated annual [medical cost of obesity](#) in the United States was nearly \$173 billion in 2019 dollars.”, supporting the idea that if Americas general health was improved, in time, the US government could provide universal health care without the astronomical costs of obesity and obesity related illnesses.

Policy

For these issues to be solved there needs to be regulations put in place to decrease the amount of spending on healthcare in America. Our solutions for this nationwide issue that will be taken place is the FDA needs to start regulating food additives and nicotine more closely. As of right now, the FDA has four steps to determine a chemical is considered safe, all the steps look closely into how chemicals react with the human body right after ingestion, or after years of consumption. Although, there are many gaps in the regulatory processes of the FDA, for example, “the analysis does not factor in the changing population structure or changes in the dietary patterns,” (Evaluating Benefits and Costs of Food Regulation). Which allows for chemicals with outdated information to continue to be used for everyday consumption. Some of the chemicals are even allowed to bypass the FDA review process due to the G.R.A.S rule, allowing manufacturers to simply state a chemical is generally safe enough to use without scientific assessment. By instilling these new regulations, the rates of obesity and diseases stemming from obesity would decrease significantly, which in result would lower the amount of money spent on taking care of obese patients.

Goals:

By examining food regulation standards and rates of chronic illness in other countries vs. America, it can reasonably be concluded that adding stricter FDA regulations on food additives will push Americans toward quality nutrition without “empty calories” that lead to issues such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.

Looking Forward: We hope that these policies will reduce not only government spending but also consumer spending on healthcare. The money saved will give us more opportunities to

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further address issues in the healthcare system and allow more Americans to have access to quality healthcare.

Sources

Comparative Data:

<https://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/about/about-efsa> <https://www.fda.gov/about-fda/fda-basics/fact-sheet-fda-glance> <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30167527/>

<https://frontiergroup.org/resources/food-and-health-europe-lessons-america/>
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7900332/>

Favorite American foods that are banned in other countries – MediaFeed

11 Banned Ingredients In Other Countries That Are Okay In The US (foodrevolution.org)

Chemicals and Additives in America Banned in Other Countries (yourlawyer.com)

[The Precautionary Principle in the European Environmental, Health and Food Safety Policy | Ecologic Institute](#)

Obesity Statistics

<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-new-drug-treatment-chronic-weight-management-first-2014> <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/data/adult.html>
[https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/topics/heart-disease-deaths.htm#:~:text=Heart% 20disease% 20has% 20been% 20the,excessive% 20alcohol% 20use% 20\(2](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/hus/topics/heart-disease-deaths.htm#:~:text=Heart%20disease%20has%20been%20the,excessive%20alcohol%20use%20(2)

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<https://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/effects/index.html>

How Obesity Impacts Mental Health

<https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db167.htm>

<https://stop.publichealth.gwu.edu/fast-facts/mental-health-obesity>