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Conceptualizing Sugar Industry Entities Influencing Health: A Historical Thematic Analysis

Alexandria, VA – A study aiming to conceptualize cane and beet sugar industry commercial entities by examining the 1943 founding of the Sugar Research Foundation (SRF) was presented at the 54th Annual Meeting of the AADOOCR, which was held in conjunction with the 49th Annual Meeting of the Canadian Association for Dental Research, on March 12-15, 2025 in New York, NY.

The abstract, “Conceptualizing Sugar Industry Entities Influencing Health: A Historical Thematic Analysis” was presented by Ngoc-Thanh Tieu of the University of California, San Francisco during the “Oral Health Inequalities” Oral Session that took place on Thursday, March 13, 2025 at 1:30 p.m. EDT (UTC-4).

Commercial determinants of health is a new research field examining how commercial actors shape individual and population health. Characterizing commercial actors with terms such as “private sector” or “industry” fails to make actionable distinctions between diverse entities and their harmful practices. This study’s objective was to conceptualize cane and beet sugar industry commercial entities by examining the 1943 founding of the SRF, an influential trade association engaged in debates about sugar and disease. SRF’s practices included funding research to substantiate claims, resulting in 60 projects and 317 publications from 1943 to 1949. SRF research lacked transparency. SRF’s interorganizational field was comprised of consumers and suppliers of SRF’s scientific research, producers of competing scientific claims, and government, professional, and scientific bodies.

A range of commercial entities within the cane and beet sugar industry formed SRF. SRF’s interorganizational field included competing commercial entities, suggesting that interventions addressing harmful commercial practices would benefit from understanding not just commercial entities, but their interlinkages within and across industries.

About AADOOCR

The American Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research is a nonprofit organization with a mission to drive dental, oral, and craniofacial research to advance health and well-being. AADOOCR represents the individual scientists, clinician-scientists, dental professionals, and students based in academic, government, non-profit and private-sector institutions who share our mission. AADOOCR is the largest division of the International Association for Dental, Oral, and Craniofacial Research. Learn more at www.aadocr.org.