Another first for California? Warning labels on soda??

By ACSH Staff — February 14, 2014

When prescription drug can potentially have dangerous side effects or interactions with other drugs, the FDA will prescribe a so-called black box warning on the label. The point is to alert both prescribers and consumers to the possibility of negative effects on health. Now, a California lawmaker wants to extend such warnings to, would you believe it, sugary drinks.

The proposed label would read: Drinking beverages with added sugar(s) contributes to obesity, diabetes, and tooth decay."

According to an article [1] in the LA Times, Democratic State Senator William Monning, who proposed the bill, said there is overwhelming research showing the link between sugary drinks and those health problems. Oh really?

What the Senator doesn’t say, and perhaps doesn’t know, is that the links between consumption of such beverages and health are correlational, not causal. One could undoubtedly find such a so-called link between numerous foods and obesity or other health issues; should we expect to see warning labels on avocados soon too many of them will make you fat!

We have moved from giving consumers scientifically valid information about the ingredients in foods and beverages to wanting to give them more or less valid opinions about the health effects of some ingredients, states ACSH’s Senior Nutrition Fellow, Dr. Ruth Kava. The backers of this bill liken the proposed warning labels to those on cigarette packages but anyone in the tobacco control field can tell you how ineffective those have been. Why try a disproven method again? she continued.