

‘Sugar papers’ show industry’s influence on dental program

By Lisa Aliferis, California Report

Hundreds of pages of newly-found documents show that the sugar industry worked closely with the federal government in the late 1960s and early 1970s to determine a research agenda to prevent cavities in children, researchers who analyzed the documents say.

In the analysis, published Wednesday in the journal PLOS Medicine, researchers concluded that industry influence starting in the late 1960s helped steer the National Institute of Dental Research, part of the National Institutes of Health, away from addressing the question of determining a safe level of sugar.

“What this paper has shown is that our (NIH) was working toward potentially answering that question,” said Cristin Kearns, a fellow at UC San Francisco and lead author of the analysis, “and the sugar industry derailed them from doing the research to help to answer that question, so we’re still debating (it) here in 2015.”

Kearns uncovered the 1,551 pages of documents at a public archive at the University of Illinois.

The documents show that an expert panel formed by the sugar industry included all but one member of the government panel that was examining priorities for research.

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