

Letter from a paediatrician to the Chilean Paediatrics Association president

Dear Dr Hernán Sepúlveda
President of the Chilean Paediatrics Association

I wish to greet you and decided to write to you about several recent international events, among them the speech made by the Director General of the WHO, Dr Margaret Chan (http://www.who.int/dg/speeches/2013/health_promotion_20130610/en/index.html) which denounces the obstacles placed and describes the strategies developed by major food companies to counter public policies in the area of feeding, as well as the European Parliament resolution that bans images that idealize infant formulas (<http://info.babymilkaction.org/pressrelease/pressrelease11jun13>).

I do so because I want to highlight the concern that I and probably many other paediatricians have, about the way in which SOCHIPE (Chilean Association of Paediatricians) is linking with food companies. As an example, let me say how inappropriate it is for SOCHIPE to have a link on its website to advertising for Danone formulas and the line of Danone Baby Foods (see picture attached). This company stands out as one of the violators of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. I also believe we give the wrong signals by having the Manager of Nestlé inaugurate a course on Paediatrics & Nutrition. Whose course is this? Is it SOCHIPE's or Nestlé's or both? Another inexplicable factor is Coca Cola sponsorship for Paediatricians Congresses. At the last one not only did they have a stand, but they handed out Coca Cola to participants.

As to breastfeeding, I don't think it is enough to include it in courses about infant feeding, when at the same time our Association allows advertising from companies that market infant formula. This creates confused messages. All the more when we allow (company reps) to go on 'medical visits' to bring 'technical information' to professionals, or when we allow speakers who are hired by companies to talk about subjects that they want to push, and the so-called 'support' for members to attend courses and congresses. Companies don't do charity; this is business. I should recall that all these marketing activities are part of the sociological concept of the 'rule of reciprocity': the more you give, the more you expect in return. There's always a moment when they will ask for something in return.

Dear Dr Sepúlveda, forgive me if what I say sounds a bit harsh. Maybe if SOCHIPE were to open up and debate publicly these issues and to review the way it relates to companies, many of the things that I described could be changed and the aims of our Association could be achieved independently. I continuously think about this, as I did when I resigned from the Paediatrics Association because of the use of Coca Cola advertisements in its magazine and congresses. The end does not justify the means, because different means lead to different ends. History is full of examples of this.

I remain yours sincerely and cordially.

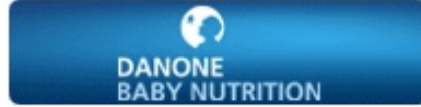
Dra. Cecilia Castillo L.

P.S. I am sending copy of this to many colleagues in Chile and abroad, to whom I have made know my concerns before.

Dra Cecilia Castillo Lancellotti
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