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Maternal and child nutrition

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Is it enough to declare conflicts of interest? In *The Lancet Series* on maternal and child nutrition, two authors declared conflicts of interest as members of the board of the Nestlé Creating Shared Value Advisory Committee—a company that repeatedly transgresses the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.¹ We wonder how the *Lancet's* policy on conflicts of interest was applied. We believe that other declarations should have been made. For example, the Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)—an adviser on the Series—lobbies governments and the UN to open up markets for its many corporate partners. In India, such concerns led to public debate that might jeopardise the acceptability of many of the recommendations made in the Series.²


In the fourth paper of the Series, the table³ suggests that the private sector generate “evidence about the positive and negative effects of private sector and market-led approaches to nutrition.” Is this the best way to generate the independent evidence that governments need to make wise decisions?

The World Health Assembly is calling for clear conflict of interest rules that prevent private commercial entities having undue influence over policy making.⁴ The Supreme Court of India recently ruled that members of scientific panels must be


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independent and without conflicts of interest.⁵

In the interest of translating evidence into policy and maintaining the credibility of science, we call on *The Lancet* to revisit and possibly strengthen its conflicts of interest policy and ensure that it is followed.

AG works for Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India and is the convener of Alliance Against Conflict of Interest, India. PR works for Baby Milk Action, an International Baby Food Action Network group in the UK. UJ declares that he has no conflicts of interest.

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¹ Save the Children UK. Superfood for babies: how overcoming barriers to breastfeeding will save children's lives. London, UK: Save the Children, 2013.

² Nagarajan R for *The Times of India*. Ignore Lancet series, experts tell Centre. http://articles.timesofindia.indiatimes.com/2013-06-28/india/40254643_1_experts-concerns-policy-decision. (accessed July 5, 2013).

³ Gillespie S, Haddad L, Mannar V, et al. The politics of reducing malnutrition: building commitment and accelerating progress. *Lancet* 2013; **382**: 552-569. [Summary](#) | [Full Text](#) | [PDF\(234KB\)](#) | [CrossRef](#) | [PubMed](#)


⁴ World Health Assembly. Maternal, infant and young child nutrition. WHA65.6. http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA65/A65_R6-en.pdf. (accessed July 4, 2013).


⁵ Supreme Court of India. Record of proceedings. <http://courtnic.nic.in/supremecourt/temp/68120043822011p.txt>. (accessed July 5, 2013).

^a Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India, Delhi 110034, India

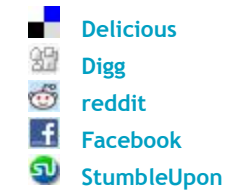
^b Baby Milk Action, Cambridge, UK

^c The Owls, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

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