

Campaign for Ethical Marketing

September 2012

Companies targeting healthworkers in the UK



Baby Milk Action is a non-profit organisation which aims to save lives and protect infant and young child health through independent controls on babyfood marketing.

We are a member of the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), a network of over 200 citizens groups in more than 100 countries.

www.babymilkaction.org

www.ibfan.org

Companies spend a fortune on promoting formula to the public and to health workers.

This promotion is highly misleading. For example, the advertisements in the same healthworker journal below each claim the brand is closer to breastmilk than the others.



Recent estimates suggest that between about 50% and 80% of the selling price of formula goes towards company promotion and profits.

This means a mother using powdered formula during the first 12 months of her baby's life will contribute around **£300** above the cost of the milk and processing towards the company's promotional budget and profit. This may rise to over **£800** for a mother who uses more expensive ready-to-feed formula.

The above advertisements appeared in the July 2012 edition of *Community Practitioner*, one of the few journals to still accept formula advertising in the UK.

Corporate takeover of health information services



Community Practitioner journal also comes with the 'Feeding for Life' supplement (left) sponsored by Danone and branded with its Cow & Gate infant formula name and heart. The Cow & Gate heart also appears on Danone's formula labels and online advertising (right). The *Feeding for Life* Foundation website directs healthworkers to Danone's *In Practice* website (see below).



Baby Milk Action has successfully brought complaints before the Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) about advertising to the public when companies have claimed their brand of formula is the 'best'. The claims do not stand up to scrutiny. All formulas on the UK market have to comply with composition requirements and include the ingredients known to be necessary for infant nutrition. Optional ingredients, often used as the basis of marketing campaigns, are of no proven benefit.

Unfortunately, the ASA refuses to investigate complaints about misleading advertising in health professional journals on the grounds that the editors are better placed to self-regulate. Clearly editors are failing in this regard as they focus on the money that advertising brings.

In June 2012, the British Journal of Midwifery ran an editorial from one of its editorial board entitled "*Breast is best but choice is paramount*", using the bogus argument that prohibiting advertising produced by companies somehow denies health workers information. Prohibiting advertising does not stop genuine peer-reviewed research appearing in journals.

There are independent sources of information available about formula and its use from academic and not-for-profit organisations. See, for example, *Infant Milks in the UK: a Practical Guide for Health Professionals* : Helen Crawley, S. Westland and *Infant Formula Explained (DVD)* produced by Baby Milk Action for the Baby Feeding Law Group.

Companies find new ways to push formula when independent information is defended

Many health authorities have stopped marketing representatives visiting health facilities, instead inviting representatives to provide information to a designated infant feeding expert or committee of experts for evaluation so that any necessary information can be communicated.

To circumvent this, companies try to sign up health workers directly to their own health worker "information services" and run and sponsor training events.



The premium on formula funds company sites and telephone lines offering to provide expert advice and resources as shown here. Danone has two apparently separate sites, one to promote the Aptamil brand of formula and the other Cow & Gate. Wyeth's "Professional Know How" site pushes its SMA formula, trying to convince health workers that it is better than other formula. Companies organise a programme of events, also branded with formula names and even award Professional Development Points if healthworkers attend.



Not for nothing are parents supporting Baby Milk Action's 'No promotion - Cheaper formula' campaign.

www.change.org/en-GB/petitions/baby-milk-companies-no-promotion-cheaper-formula