



BPNI/2020/022

July 10, 2020

Dr. Luciana Rodrigues Silva
President, Brazilian Pediatrics Society (SBP)
Brazil

SUB: SBP-Nestlé program to train pediatric residents

Dear Dr. Rodrigues Silva,

Greetings from BPNI, India !

The Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India BPNI is a civil society organisation of close to 4000 members from among pediatricians, nurses and other professionals. BPNI is an agency authorized by the Government of India since 1995 to monitor the national legislation the *Infant Milk Substitutes Feeding Bottles, and Infant Foods (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act 1992, and Amendment Act 2003*. The IMS Act regulates marketing of the baby foods and feeding bottles. It is BPNI and its allied national partners made it possible to have a law in India as a follow up to the International Code of Marketing for Breastmilk Substitutes. This law bans all kind of promotion of breastmilk substitutes for children under the age 2.

We like to express our serious concerns about the 'J.Pedia' jointly launched by Nestlé and SBP. We consider this 'association' to be a manipulation by the food industry and believe it should not have happened in the first place.

In the above said association with Nestle, there is clearly a conflict of interest. Member States are committed through the World Health Assembly resolutions to avoid such conflicts of interest.

- The World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution 49.15 in 1996 called upon governments states that *"Member States are urged to ensure that monitoring...is carried out in a transparent, independent manner, free from commercial influence."*
- In the year 2005, World Health Assembly (WHA) resolution 58.32, further urges Member States *"to ensure that financial support and other incentives for programmes and health professionals working in infant and young child health do not create conflict of interest"*;
- In May 2016 the World Health Assembly adopted the "Guidance on Inappropriate Promotion of Foods for Infants and Young Children" (WHA69/7 - <https://www.who.int/nutrition/topics/guidance-inappropriate-food-promotion-iyc/en/>), which urges companies, health workers, health systems and health professional associations - such as the SBP - to avoid conflicts of interest

When a manufacturer of breastmilk substitutes and infant foods provides training and education to pediatricians or any healthcare providers, It is a situation with apparent conflict of interest. In principle it is an unethical and unacceptable practice. It sets in a precedent for the generations to come. Major beneficiary is a food company because it can only survive by increasing sales of its products. There is no other objective.

Influencing the young health workers makes a sustainable strategy. They are the ones who advise mothers or guardians on what and how to feed their babies. Clearly, after receiving a free course in pediatric nutrition, these professionals will be in favour of products from Nestlé and will recommend them even when that is not appropriate.

As a policy, BPNI does not accept funds of any kind from the companies manufacturing baby foods, feeding bottles etc. and from organization/industry having conflict of interest.



Breastfeeding

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The foods produced and sold by Nestle are almost always ultra-processed and incidentally the evidence that consumption of UPF is harmful comes from Brazil. Therefore joining in such an association as in this is detrimental to infant health.

I would like to emphasise that the Indian Academy of Pediatrics (IAP), the professional body of over 23,000 Indian pediatricians, took a concrete step in 1997 to avoid conflict of interest with corporations when its' General Assembly passed a resolution which says, "*The I.A.P. shall not accept the sponsorship in any form from any industry connected directly or indirectly with the products covered by the Infant Milk Substitutes, Feeding Bottles and Infant food (Regulation of Production and Distribution) Act 1992.*"

We would expect from you to demonstrate the will to improve child health and lead from front to get the Brazilian Association to pass a resolution like the IAP and create history. Brazil has shown tremendous will in dealing with ultra processed foods.

May I, therefore, request you as President of the SBP reconsider and drop association with nestle in larger interest of public health in Brazil and the world.

With best regards,

Dr. Arun Gupta MD, FAAP
Central Coordinator, BPNI

Copy to President, IAP India