

When you participate in a Baby Fair or Award Scheme that is sponsored by a formula company, what impression do you give to parents and to colleagues?

Consider the following and discuss it with your colleagues

- ◆ If a health worker accepts an award or speaks at a formula event what impression does it give? What does it do to your credibility as a professional who is expected to support international and national health recommendations and implement best practice?
- ◆ When a health worker links with a company they may become influenced themselves by the marketing and perceive the company and its products as beneficial to infant well-being – generating good will towards the company is one of the aims of marketing.
- ◆ By displaying posters, circulating their emails, nominating people or products for awards, exhibiting, giving presentations at fairs etc, you are assisting this marketing.



- ◆ When you think well of a company this may make it difficult to refuse to use the marketing materials from that company, and may be reflected in recommendations made regarding suitable products for infants who are not breastfeeding.

- ◆ You may be pictured at the event and your picture used in marketing materials. For some events, by signing the registration form you are agreeing that your name/picture can be used.

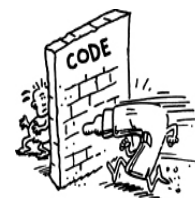
Who pays for marketing?

- ◆ These fairs, awards, and other events are marketing activities by the companies with the end purpose of increasing sales of their products. Their shareholders do not allow money to be spent unless it shows an increase in profits.
- ◆ Marketing costs money. The cost is added to the price of the formula or other products. Parents and taxpayers (for the health service supplies) pay for this marketing. Even the glossy materials add to the price of the products.



Your responsibility

- ◆ Most codes of ethics/conduct of health professional associations discourage involvement in marketing to patients/clients and encourage providing high standards of care.
- ◆ Whilst individual health workers may do what they wish in their own time, the name of a hospital may not be used for marketing Code related products if it is a designated Baby-friendly hospital. This means an individual may not use the name of their hospital in their profile, publicity, sign on their stand etc.
- ◆ The International Code says “5.1 There should be no advertising or other form of promotion to the general public of products within the scope of this Code.” Subsequent resolution Forty-ninth World Health Assembly May 1996 says that governments should “ensure that ...financial support for professionals working in infant and young child health does not create conflicts of interest, especially with regard to the WHO/UNICEF Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative.”
- ◆ Unfortunately, the EU Directive and thus the Irish legislation do not include all the protective elements of the International Code and its subsequent relevant resolutions, thus leaving parents and health workers open to inappropriate marketing, increased costs and babies at risk of ill health.



More information:

<http://www.babyfriendly.ie/resources.htm> and scroll down to The Code.
BFHI Link Issue 11, November 2001