



**ISSOP**  
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY for  
SOCIAL PEDIATRICS and CHILD HEALTH

## **Declaration**

### **Conflict of Interest and Funding from the Baby Food Industry**

*26<sup>th</sup> March 2019*

The recent decision by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health to cease accepting funding from infant formula manufacturers,<sup>1</sup> and similar policies of other professional societies, is welcomed and endorsed by the International Society of Social Pediatrics and Child Health (ISSOP). ISSOP, which published its own position 2014 statement on “Sponsorship of Paediatric Associations by the Baby Feeding Industry,”<sup>2</sup> opposes the sponsorship of formal and informal paediatric endeavours by any business, governmental or professional organization that is directly or indirectly involved in research, manufacturing, marketing, and/or distribution of infant formula or other products that that may be detrimental to the health and well-being of infants, children, and youth.

In concert with other professional organizations endorsing this Declaration, *whereas*:

- Breastfeeding is of huge importance to child health, yet is under threat around the world owing to social changes in the position of women (including more female employment) and to commercial pressure from the manufacturers of breast milk substitutes (BMS).
- The position of the World Health Organisation is clear on the need to protect mothers from marketing pressure, as are the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes (International Code) and subsequent resolutions of the World Health Assembly, which are accorded equal value to the International Code.
- Resolution 69/7 of the 2016 World Health Assembly (WHA) states that, “Health professional associations should not...accept equipment or services from companies that market foods for infants and young children, accept gifts or incentives from such companies,” or “allow such companies to sponsor meetings of health professionals and scientific meetings.”
- As WHO officers have stated, “acceptance of funding or other incentives, however conditional, creates a sense of obligation and loyalty to the company in question”.

Therefore:

- Accepting funding from the manufacturers of breast milk substitutes is a conflict of interest by paediatricians and paediatric associations.
- Paediatric associations and individual paediatricians that accept such sponsorships are in violation of the International Code.

- Paediatricians who are members of paediatric associations that accept such sponsorships, in violation of the International Code, should work within their associations to terminate these policies and activities.
- Paediatricians should engage with other professional colleagues, e.g. obstetricians, public health practitioners, nutritionists, etc., to address similar policies in their professional organizations.
- Academic institutions responsible for training child health practitioners should educate their students and trainees on the importance of breast milk feeding and their support of the International Code, and how to advocate for them in the various venues in which they practice.
- Paediatricians should work with all stakeholders in child health and well-being to educate and inform the public on the importance of breast milk feeding and their support of the International Code.
- Paediatricians should work with hospitals and related institutions that care for infants to implement policies that support the International Code, including committing to become Baby Friendly institutions.

ISSOP, in concert with collaborating organizations endorsing this Declaration, calls on all paediatric and child serving associations and stakeholders in child health and well-being to endorse, disseminate, and implement this Declaration to advance the International Code, and end all support from manufacturers of breast milk substitutes, and other products detrimental to child health for professional education, conferences, research and other professional endeavours.

## References

1. RCPCH statement on relationship with formula milk companies [Internet]. RCPCH. [cited 2019 Mar 28]. Available from: <https://www.rcpch.ac.uk/news-events/news/rcpch-statement-relationship-formula-milk-companies>
2. Waterston, T. (2014). Sponsorship of paediatricians/paediatric societies by the Baby Feeding Industry (ISSOP Position Statement 4) (pp. 1–16). ISSOP. Available from <https://www.issop.org/2014/04/24/issop-position-statement-4/>
3. Costello A, Branca F, Rollins N, Stahlhofer M, Gummer-Strawn L. Health professional associations and industry funding. *Lancet* 2017, 389: 597-9. Available from [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(17\)30277-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(17)30277-5/fulltext)
4. Waterston T, Wright C. Sponsorship of paediatric associations by manufacturers of breastmilk substitutes. *Lancet* 2019, 393: 622-3. . Available from [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)32845-9/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(18)32845-9/fulltext)