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Breastfeeding Advocate (30+ years)
Co-drafted Douglas College Breastfeeding Counselor Course
Set-up the B.C. Baby Friendly Hospital Network
Employed by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the
World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)

Documents to support breastfeeding:

1981 International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes

(the Code) was adopted by all member states (except 1) at the World Health Assembly (WHA). Nestle aggressively lobbied against a marketing code. Every year, at the WHA, new resolutions are added to strengthen the Code. The Code came to Canada and the formula companies lobbied the Federal Government that the Code was meant for 3rd world countries and not Canada. The Honorable Monique Begin, Minister of Health at the time, voted that the Code be made into law but instead the Government voted to just endorse it.

* Is Canada a leader or a follower?

1989 Protecting, Promoting and Supporting Breastfeeding:

The Special Role of Maternity Services

(Also called the Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding or the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative)

Joint WHO/ UNICEF Statement (Protecting = the International Code)

1989 World Summit for Children (hosted by Canada)

1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child – ratified by Canada and binding International Law. (document came out of the World Summit for Children).

Page 33, Nutrition (vi) “Empowerment of all women to breastfeed their children exclusively for four to six months (later wording changed to six months by WHA resolution) and to continue breastfeeding, with complementary food, well into the second year.”

* Sixty five out of 195 countries have now enacted all or many of the Code provisions into law.

The US Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding has called for compliance with the Code. (January 20, 2011)

The Federal Government must take immediate action to protect women wanting to breastfeed

It is more than 30 years since the Code was endorsed. The government is still saying “educate not legislate”. The unethical marketing of the formula companies (especially Nestle) is more blatant than ever.

In December of 2010, Dr. David Butler-Jones, Chief Public Health Officer for Canada, was asked by the Honorable Leona Aglukkaq, Federal Minister of Health, to respond to a letter of concern re Code violations. In his response, Dr. David Butler-Jones, mentioned programs to promote breastfeeding but did not mention the Code. He did point-out, however, “that breastfeeding is not necessarily a viable option for all mothers.”

My questions: Because a few mothers, (likely about 3%) need formula should the blatant advertising continue? Does Dr. Butler-Jones know about the Code? Does he care about the Code? Does he feel Canada is exempt from the provisions and recommendation of the World Health Organization? If so, why?

Breastfeeding advocates have done a lot of work to promote breastfeeding. The initiation rate is now 90 – 95%. The most recent Canadian stats (Chalmers 2006) “Breastfeeding Rates and Hospital Breastfeeding Practices: A National Survey” looked at 6,421 women across Canada. While 90.3% initiated breastfeeding only 14% were still breastfeeding at 6 months. This means that 86% of Canadian children are failing to receive the nutrition that both Health Canada and the Canadian Paediatric Society recommend.

“When we encourage women to breastfeed but do not control the marketing of formulas and when we allow the formula companies to educate our health professionals, we are setting women up for guilt and failure. When breastfeeding fails it is not the woman who has failed it is the system that has failed the woman. This is not fair. Babies lose out on their birth right, mothers are denied the ability to give their children the best and health care costs are increased.”

Renee Hefti – Graham, March 11, 2011

We request that the Federal Government:

Immediately start the process to enact the Code into law

Some of the many ways the formula companies are violating the WHO Code in Canada

Only 6 hospitals pay for the formula they need

When hospitals accept “free” formula there is always a bidding war between the companies to get the contract – so the stakes get higher and higher and include hospital equipment and money. Fifteen years ago the Royal Columbian Hospital in New Westminster, (4,000 deliveries per year) was offered 5 million dollars if they would accept “free” formula. How much do the companies offer today?

Many hospitals still give free formula supplies to women at discharge

The companies admit there is a 93% brand loyalty rate when the hospital uses their product. When a hospital signs a contract with a certain company that company (in their own words) “immediately blitzes all key retail stores” and “educates the pharmacists and the store managers to recommend that particular brand.”

Formula companies are educating health professionals, along with “free” meals and alcohol about how to manage infant feeding.

Example 1: Nestle routinely “educates” Canadian Pharmacists. The Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy refuses to sever their ties with Nestle.

Example 2: The Canadian Paediatric Society, who say they support the Code, are in direct conflict of interest when they receive huge amounts of funding and education from formula companies’. Individual doctors are also given luxury weekends away with their families, courtesy of these companies

Example 3: Two nurse / lactation consultants resigned from a Burnaby Hospital (B.C.) in 2008 because their supervisor organized a Nestle “free” dinner, alcohol and infant feeding seminar at a large hotel) (likely happening routinely across Canada.)

Formula company reps are infiltrating the health care system to teach prenatal classes to expectant parents who don't speak English

At Children and Women's Hospital in Vancouver a Nestle rep was teaching prenatal “breastfeeding” classes in Cantonese and Mandarin

Most women get “free” formula supplies sent to their homes

Example 1: Women who buy their maternity clothes at Thyme Maternity Stores are encouraged to sign up to receive “free” gifts and coupons from Nestle including a back pack. The back pack is shown to them in the store and is sent to their home with formula samples. Because human beings like “free” things, it is a marketing technique that works. Women do not understand that when they supplement breastfeeding with formula they lose their milk. Studies show that when there is formula in the house most women use it because they are not confident that they will be able to make sufficient milk for their babies (although 97% could feed twins or triplets)

Example 2. Other stores also offer “free” samples and promotions including Babies RUs

Formula companies’ ads are rampant on the internet

Example: if a woman googles breastfeeding, formula company ads pop up.

Through magazines, materials mailed to their homes, drug stores, the internet and ? women are encouraged to join Baby Clubs

Example: Nestle is the worst. When women join these clubs they get formula samples, coupons and “breastfeeding” advice.

Baby Fairs are held routinely across Canada

These fairs are a commercial way to expose pregnant women to products including formula samples. Women are encouraged to sign up for “free” gifts which means ongoing marketing will be sent to their homes. Sometimes these fairs are called Baby Showers and are held at hotels along with a “free” lunch.

Nestle has recently started to advertise their formula on Canadian television.

Example: Nestle has timed their formula ad to coincide with the Health Advice given by Dr. Rhonda Low on CTV. Food and Drug Canada has given Nestle permission to do these ads because as they say “we believe it is best to educate not legislate”. When I complained to Food and Drug about Nestle they told me “they would speak to Nestle”!!! Now please tell me what good that would do?

Advertising of pacifiers, bottles and teats are not allowed under the Code but these ads appear regularly.

Example 1: tommee tippee promotes their feeding system as “Works beautifully”
“Just like Mom”

Example 2: Dr. Brown advertises theirs as “similar to breastfeeding”

Example 3: Playtex says their bottle “mimics breastfeeding”

Example 4: Nestle* advertises their bottle and teats as “a close alternative to breast feeding” and state “it supports seamless switching from breast to bottle”

*Nestle has long owned the “lions share of the formula / baby food industry and they are buying up the smaller companies

Example 1: Nestle has bought out Gerber (baby foods)

Example 2: Nestle has bought out Nuk (bottle teats and pacifiers)

Dr. Chandra, Canadian researcher, (Newfoundland) did research for Nestle. The British Medical Journal exposed that Dr. Chandra was found to have long been falsifying his research including claims re Nestle formula. Dr. Chandra fled Canada in disgrace.

After more than 30 years, isn't it past time that the Federal Government of Canada recognizes that education alone is not working and the Code must be enacted into *law?

*“Law is not about making money, but about justice and the proper order of things”

Dave Wells

Breastmilk and formulas (artificial milks) are not the same
(references available on request)

Human milk is perfect for human babies. It is the right nutrition and contains over 200 active ingredients for growth, development and prevention of many diseases. Formula does not have any of these factors. One feeding of artificial milk can set a baby up for allergies for the rest of its life.

The companies have been saying since 1912 (Nestle) that their formulas are just like breastmilk but every year they add something new or delete something. The companies will never be able to add living cells. Formula is manufactured from cow's milk. It is right for a baby calf.

“Formula feeding is the biggest experiment ever done on mankind”
Maureen Minchin “Breastfeeding Matters” 1985

Human milk is free. Artificial milks cost about \$150 per month.

Babies who are fed artificial milks have:

- Increased rates of morbidity and mortality and chronic disease
- Increased rates of respiratory diseases and asthma
- Increased rates of otitis media
- Increased rate of gastroenteritis
- Increased rate of necrotizing enterocolitis in preterm or low wt. babies
- Increased risk of obesity
- Increased risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS)
- Increased risk of allergies, celiac disease and Crohn's Disease
- Increased risk of childhood cancers
- Increased risk of insulin dependent diabetes mellitus (IDDM) and non-IDDM
- Increased risk of cardiovascular disease and high blood pressure
- Risk of E. Sakazakii infection from powdered artificial milks
- Lower IQ's
- Lower cognitive outcomes sustained through adolescence

Mothers who don't breastfeed:

Have an increased risk of breast cancer, endometrial cancer, and osteoporosis and miss the advantage of healthy post partum weight loss. And mothers miss out on the close emotional nurturing that breastfeeding provides

Breastfeeding saves health care dollars

(more examples and references available on request)

It is estimated that "if 90% of US mothers followed the guidelines to breastfeed for 6 months, the government would save \$13 million in medical costs"

Because breastfed babies are healthier they require less doctor visits and less hospitalization.

The cost of treating 1 case of breast cancer is horrific. Breastfeeding is an important way to decrease breast cancer rates.

Breastfeeding mothers have less absenteeism from the workforce

... because their babies are healthier

Breastfeeding is good for the environment

No need to use valuable natural resources, no green space needed for cows and no harmful toxins expelled into the air from them,, no manufacturing pollution, no pollution from vehicles used to transport the artificial milks, no energy required to clean and sterilize equipment and no left over cans, bottles and teats to fill our landfills

“SO what’s not good about breastmilk
and breastfeeding?”

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