



coalizione italiana per l'alimentazione dei neonati e dei bambini

The Italian Coalition for Infant and Young Child Feeding (CIANB) joins other political and health authorities in the stance taken about the recent arrests in Tuscany and Liguria of pediatricians and sales representatives from formula companies accused of inappropriately encouraging mothers to use formula, in exchange for gifts and benefits from the companies for the doctors.

Should the accusations be proven true in court, CIANB believes that appropriate measures should be taken with the healthcare professionals involved and asks that the following be recognized:

- 1. biological damages to the infants who received formula instead of breastmilk without a documented medical reason;*
- 2. biological damages to their mothers for missing out on the well-documented protective effects of breastfeeding for their health;*
- 3. financial damages to these families.*

These episodes have shown the degenerative nature of this conflict of interest and very clearly revealed the system of doing business that several associations who are part of the CIANB have been decrying for years. These activities have become habits, which often are not illegal nor reach the same levels of corruption that have emerged in the current scandal, however, most certainly violate professional ethics as well as the International Code on the Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes of the World Health Organization.

The Code, which was adopted by the World Health Assembly in 1981 and for which Italy has regularly voted its support, aims at providing safe and adequate nutrition for infants by protecting and promoting breastfeeding through limiting the marketing and distribution practices associated with all breastmilk substitutes. The Code does not prohibit their use or sale, but rather places restrictions on their marketing so that no breastmilk substitute (including special formulas, follow-up formulas, complementary drinks and foods, bottles and teats) may be advertised or promoted using discounts, special offers, free samples, or free supplies to hospitals.

CIANB calls on Health Minister Beatrice Lorenzin to take this opportunity to use the collective outrage about these marketing techniques to enforce Law 82/2009¹ which regulates the marketing of breastmilk substitutes (and whose sanctions have not yet been put into practice because of administrative delays) and to update the law to fully adopt all the articles of the WHO Code.



The Coalition also calls on pediatric societies and unions to revise their continuing education programs so that they are free of all commercial interests and render the budgets for these events transparent.

CIANB also calls attention to other questions that this scandal has raised, which are all examples of the increasingly intricate interplay between healthcare and business, involving healthcare providers who become, more or less unknowingly, marketing agents in exchange for donations which are not necessarily objects or paid vacations, but also the more common form of attendance at industry-sponsored continuing education events (conferences and congresses).

All babies and children have the right to adequate nutrition and healthy and nutritional foods; all parents have the right to receive scientifically-based information free of commercial interests so that they can make informed decisions about their infant and child feeding choices. These principles form the base of CIANB's Manifesto on Infant and Young Child Feeding,ⁱⁱ and we ask all organizations and individuals to support and join us in defending them.

ⁱ MINISTERO DEL LAVORO, DELLA SALUTE E DELLE POLITICHE SOCIALI, DECRETO 9 aprile 2009, n. 82. Regolamento concernente l'attuazione della direttiva 2006/141/CE per la parte riguardante gli alimenti per lattanti e gli alimenti di proseguimento destinati alla Comunità europea ed all'esportazione presso Paesi terzi. ([GU n. 155 del 7-7-2009](#))

ⁱⁱ <http://www.cianb.it/manifesto>