

Relationship of the Sociedad Argentina de Pediatría with the pharmaceutical industry and the producers of breastmilk substitutes

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Breastfeeding is the best nutrition for all children in health and disease. No pediatrician should ignore this dogmatic principle in pediatric learning, reinforced by the permanent emergence of new evidence that supports and reaffirms this concept.

Pediatrics is a medical specialty in which the professional must constantly make recommendations to families and the community on many essential aspects of children's health (nutrition at different stages of life, vaccinations, growth, development, and bonding, among others), promoting the current and future health of the child. Pediatricians must be prepared to assist their patients even in unfavorable situations, offering the best alternatives when breastfeeding is not possible. It is a specialty that has a high workload and low remuneration in public and private settings. This high workload conspires against the time needed to update or develop research tasks, and the expenses of taking courses or attending scientific events are often beyond their economic possibilities. This problem is not limited to Argentina, as it is observed almost everywhere, with little difference between low- and middle-income countries and those with greater economic resources.

In this complex labor context, and in the face

of the permanent and accelerated generation of new evidence, the role of scientific societies (the Sociedad Argentina de Pediatría [SAP] in our country) acquires a special role in facilitating the training of human resources for health. Through its courses, scientific meetings, and the formation of expert committees, it is the lighthouse that should guide the health team with its recommendations, without forgetting that all the activities of our society require resources for their realization.

The generation of new knowledge and technological innovations is crossed by industry participation in all medical specialties. Knowing this reality and interpreting its conclusions is part of pediatric training by making the best decisions in patient care. The contact of the pediatrician and the SAP with the industry should not hinder understanding the situation.

SAP constantly analyzes, with its experts in each area, the origin and application of scientific information in daily practice. Thus, the recommendations, guidelines, and protocols proposed in its publications and the scientific programs of its academic events emerge without the industry's interference in their content.

Recently, SAP produced a document stating the principles that guide its relationship with the

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breast milk substitute industry.¹ The point 9 of this statement clearly states: *We value collaboration with industry within an ethical framework that guarantees our independence, ensuring that no commercial interests influence the content of our scientific programs.*

In addition to this approach, which is oriented towards access to information for pediatricians, we must ask ourselves how the information reaches our patients.

The new information technologies have substantially and, I believe, definitively modified mankind's forms of communication. Virtuality, explicitly represented by the Internet and social networks, has modified the doctor-patient relationship with special emphasis on pediatrics. In most cases, our patients have already read about the main reasons for consultations that bring them to our office. Moreover, in the last few years, through artificial intelligence, information can be generated and used as a source of information for our patients with an ease that was inconceivable a few years ago! As pediatricians or SAP, we cannot participate in content regulation or observe the degree of industry involvement in these new communication channels.

It is not appropriate to leave recommendations on the upbringing of our patients in the hands of networks and influencers with dubious or no pediatric training without adequate limits. We must focus all our efforts on capturing attention and strengthening the interest of our patients in our recommendations, based on the best scientific evidence and endorsed by the SAP.

A serious and adult relationship between scientific societies and industry is possible without allowing the latter to influence scientific content and recommendations.

The sole and ultimate goal is, and will continue to be, the best care for our patients. ■

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