

Advertising and sponsorship by formula milk companies Position Statement, 15 January 2019



British Journal of Midwifery (BJM)'s engagement with formula milk manufacturers and distributors is guided by the World Health Organization's (WHO's) 'International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes'¹, the ABPI code of conduct for pharmaceutical marketing in the UK², and UK law³.

Although BJM accepts advertising and sponsorship from all companies operating ethically and in accordance with UK law and regulations, we accept that some areas may require a more sensitive approach. The following restrictions apply to associations with formula milk companies:

1. Study days are sponsored by 'unrestricted' educational grants, i.e. they are devised and planned by BJM, with no input from the sponsor or any third party
2. Sponsorship of events is always transparent, in accordance with items 9.10 and 12.1 of the APBI code
3. Midwives are offered a choice to pay to attend sponsored study days if they feel unable to accept a free place
4. Formula milk advertisements are required, in accordance with the ABPI code, to include a statement that 'breastfeeding is best'.

BJM respects the professional motivation and intelligence of midwives to form their own judgments about advertising, sponsorship and information provided by all companies, including formula milk companies.

BJM welcomes all feedback on the journal and its events, and endeavours always to be guided by the professional development support and education midwives tell us they want and need.

Understanding the WHO and ABPI codes

Both codes make a clear distinction between information and marketing that is appropriate for health professionals, and that which is appropriate for the general public.

Article 7.2 of the WHO code states: '*Information provided by manufacturers and distributors to health professionals ... should be restricted to scientific and factual matters, and ... should not imply or create a belief that bottlefeeding is equivalent or superior to breast-feeding.*'

Article 7.3 of the WHO code states that '*no financial or material inducements to promote products should be offered by manufacturers or distributors to health workers.*'

Article 7.5 of the WHO code states that manufacturers and distributors may contribute to '*fellowships, study tours, research grants, attendance at professional conferences, or the like*' so long as both the manufacturer/distributors and the health professional beneficiaries disclose such contributions.

Article 11.2 of the WHO code states that '*Monitoring the application of this Code lies with governments acting individually.*'

Therefore, advertising that is factual and scientific, directed at midwives, and states that 'breastfeeding is best', and sponsorships of educational and professional development initiatives for midwives that are transparent and disclosed are considered in accord with the ABPI and WHO codes.

BJM Awards

Similar guidance is applied to the BJM Awards:

1. The Awards are devised and planned by BJM, with no input from the sponsor or any third party
2. Sponsorship of the Awards is always transparent, in accordance with items 9.10 and 12.1 of the APBI code
3. Midwives are offered a choice to pay to attend the Awards if they feel unable to accept a free place
4. Sponsorship applies to specific categories. The winners and nominees of unsponsored categories will receive their awards from a member of the BJM Editorial Board or a member of the MA Healthcare editorial team.

¹ World Health Organization (1981) *International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes*. www.who.int/nutrition/publications/code_english.pdf (last accessed 12 February 2018)

² ABPI (2016) *Code of Practice for the Pharmaceutical Industry 2016 Edition*. <http://www.pmcpa.org.uk/thecode/Documents/Code%20of%20Practice%202016%20.pdf> (last accessed 13 February 2018)

³ The Infant Formula and Follow-on Formula (England) Regulations 2007