

Chloe Green

I wish to make a submission to The Parliamentary Inquiry Into Breastfeeding. My response relates to these items from the terms of reference –

- b. evaluate the impact of marketing of breast milk substitutes on breastfeeding rates and, in particular, in disadvantaged, Indigenous and remote communities;
- d. initiatives to encourage breastfeeding;
- e. examine the effectiveness of current measures to promote breastfeeding;

I'm a mother of 2 who is quite committed to breastfeeding and I believe that my personal experiences and observations are relevant to this inquiry.

I find the marketing of toddler formula quite worrisome. I will use a TV ad for Karicare Gold as an example because they are the most blatant in suggesting that artificial milk is appropriate instead of breast milk but I find similar themes/techniques recur in the advertising conducted by other brands. The Karicare ad features a revolting bear that says she breastfed for about 12 months but then she was worried that they weren't getting quite enough from their solids and since she didn't want to feed them milk from another species she gives the toddler gold. Then there's a voice over about it being an important next step. The ad really concerns me on a number of levels

1-that it suggests that 12 months is the appropriate time to stop BF – this is despite WHO recommendation that breastfeeding should continue until the

age of 2.

2-that it says that Karicare is better than milk from 'another' species. Is it made from human milk? I think not!!

3-that it subtly implies that BM isn't nutritious enough to be an adequate supplement to solids

4-that it suggests that formula is 'an important next step' as if breast-feeding until you introduce cows milk and skipping formula totally would be causing your toddler to miss out on some imaginary developmental milestone

Most of the websites of the companies that sell baby formula offer nutritional information. I find this quite concerning because it is often hard to tell when the nutritional information ends and the advertising begins. The Heinz website for example has a whole page¹ about the benefits of the bidifilus/probiotics in its toddler formula and an offer of a free sample on the same page. This page does not make clear which parts are informative and which parts are advertising furthermore despite the fact that the advertising of infant formula is banned in Australia passages such as this one blatantly discuss and promote infant formula

"Within hours of being born, bacteria from the baby's mother and from the environment begin to establish themselves within an infants's (sic) body. By the age of two, the bacteria in the child's digestive system are more like that of an adult, with both good and bad bacteria present.

*For a variety of reasons, not all mothers are able to successfully breastfeed. **Infants who are formula fed have much less of the good bacteria compared with those who are breastfed; this is where a formula containing probiotic bacteria may be recommended.***

1

http://www.nestle.com.au/Nutrition/Toddlers/NESLAC_Sample/OrderSample.htm (07 may 2007)

Choosing a formula that contains probiotic bacteria may contribute to a young child's growth and health and help to protect from infection such as diarrhea caused by rotavirus."

2

The sentence that I have put in bold type makes specific reference to infants and formula. I would argue that it is in fact promotion of infant formula taking place within the context of advertising for toddler formula.

It is my suggestion that to increase and promote breastfeeding, greater controls need to be placed on 'under the radar' advertising and promotions of this nature.

I believe that because explicit advertising of infant formula is banned that companies that sell it use the marketing of toddler formula to raise their profile and also to deliver messages about infant feeding (as demonstrated above). In order to prevent this I believe that the best tactic would be to follow WHO guidelines and place a ban upon the marketing of all artificial baby milks not just those designed for infants.

On a number of occasions friends of mine have been offered samples of toddler formula by chemists and early childhood nurses. I believe that this form of promotion should be halted. Many mothers have a great deal of trust in nurses and pharmacy nurses; there is an expectation that as professionals they have access to greater knowledge and have the best interests of babies in mind. With those expectations in place the supply of samples can appear to be endorsement by experts. In conjunction with advertising suggesting that toddler formula is 'nature's next step' and so on it isn't surprising that so many women chose to replace breast with bottle prematurely.

I am also of the opinion that the medical profession needs to be better informed about breastfeeding. I was quite astonished to be told by a GP and a midwife that I would need to give up breastfeeding my first child because I

² *ibid*

was pregnant with my second. I ignored their advice and continued to breastfeed until my son self-weaned during my second trimester. Had I been less confident about my ability to breastfeed and more prepared to trust the 'experts' my son would have been denied the benefits of several months of breastfeeding and we both would have suffered through a forced weaning.

During my stays in hospital after the births of my children I often received conflicting advice about breastfeeding from midwives, this confusion made it more difficult for me to establish breastfeeding. I believe that women should have greater access to lactation consultants to eliminate this kind of confusion. Although it may cost more to provide lactation consultants I believe it is an investment that will pay for itself in healthier children. The ABA currently provides a fantastic service and one counselor in particular has been a great help to me. It would be great if they were provided with more funding to enable them to have a higher profile and provide more counselors.