

# An **IBFAN-ICDC** report on baby food marketing practices



This page forms part of the global monitoring report – Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules 2010. Companies' marketing behaviour is measured against the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and WHA resolutions.

## Abbott Laboratories

## Company profile & Code violations

The Executive Summary to Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules 2010 is available at [www.ibfan.org](http://www.ibfan.org)

On the Abbott Nutrition website, a statement proudly announced that the company is committed to the nutritional health and well-being of babies, and that it advocates breastfeeding as the first choice for infants. The company declares it follows the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes *“as it is legislated and implemented locally.”*

Under the Code, however, companies are required to ensure that their conduct at every level conforms to the minimum standards set by the Code, independent of measures taken for its implementation at the national level. This report will show how Abbott fails to keep to their own promise to comply with local laws and how it violates the International Code.

The company's history began in 1903 with the founding of the Moores and Ross Milk Company in Columbus, Ohio. In 1924, the company developed a milk brand, Similac, which still continues today. In November 2007, the name became Abbott Nutrition. The parent company, Abbott Laboratories, is headquartered in Chicago and makes its money from pharmaceuticals, nutritional products and medical products.

Apart from **Similac**, Abbott's other internationally recognised brand in paediatric nutrition is the **Gain** brand of follow-up formula. Both ranges feature prominently as Code violating brands.

Abbott does not release sales figures for individual brands but global sales of paediatric nutritional products are reported to be worth US\$ 2.8 billion in 2009. Asia is an important market for Abbott as the region accounts for 50% of its international sales outside the United States.

In 2009, Abbott opened a US\$300 million paediatric nutrition facility in Singapore, their largest-ever among 11 other nutrition manufacturing facilities the company owns around the world. The Singapore plant has a production capacity to cater for up to one million Asian infants and children. The company is said to be investing US\$20 million on an R & D centre to adapt products to suit Asian needs including taste, flavouring, packaging and formulation.

Apart from regular Similac which the company markets as *“the #1 doctor-recommended”*, Abbott now markets a range of organic formula – **Similac Organic** – which captured 30% of the organic infant formula market in the US in 2007.

Chairman / Miles D. White,  
Abbott Laboratories,  
100 Abbott Park Road  
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<http://abbottnutrition.com>  
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### Brands

Similac  
Gain  
Isomil  
Neosure

### Logos





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Sales were estimated to be worth US\$10 million then. Parents have rushed to embrace the product even though the product cost 30% more than regular **Similac** because of the perception that organic is healthier.

What is not commonly known is that **Similac Organic** is sweetened with cane sugar or sucrose which is much sweeter than lactose which other organic infant formula manufacturers use. Babies like **Similac Organic**'s sweeter taste and experts worry that eating such a sweet formula can lead not just to tooth decay but overfeeding and a lifelong craving for sweeter foods.

There is also the wider concern of childhood obesity, a pressing public health issue. Making sweeter formula is contrary to the ethos of organic food since parents choose organic products with their family's health and well-being in mind.

In 2008, Abbott unleashed its latest paediatric nutritional product **Similac Advance Early Shield** which it touted, in violation of the Code and subsequent resolutions, to be the only infant formula that has *"a unique blend of prebiotics, nucleotides and antioxidants to support a baby's natural system"*. To convince mothers to buy the products, the product website carries the overused and tired slogan *"Closer than ever to breastmilk"*.

In the US, States receive price rebates from Abbott under the federally subsidised Special Supplemental Nutrition Programmes for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), a programme often lamented as being the largest promoter of formula feeding to low-income women.

In September 2010, Abbott recalled up to 5 million cans of **Similac** infant formula sold in the U.S., Puerto Rico, Guam and some Caribbean countries. The recall followed the discovery of beetle parts in the products and in a Michigan manufacturing plant. There were concerns that such contamination in formula could cause stomach aches and digestion problems. Abbott said the recall is likely to cause US\$100m in lost revenues.

## LOOK AT THIS! OLD WINE IN NEW BOTTLES



Abbott tinkers with age recommendation, from 1 year to 2 years.

### Hiding a mischievous secret in Cambodia

The Cambodian Law covers the marketing of products used for babies up to 24 months old, preventing a product such as Gain from being promoted.

So what happens when Abbott imports milk intended for use from one year onwards? How to legitimise the promotion of a product when the law prohibits it?

Like pouring old wine into new bottles, Abbott slaps on a new label over the old, taking the product out of the scope of the law. Change one year into two years – simple!



# An **IBFAN-ICDC** spotlight on corporate marketing behaviour

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## BREAKING THE LAW IN THE PHILIPPINES

- ❖ In the Philippines where the law covers growing up milks for young children and where

advertisements require approval from authorities, an advertorial on **Gain Plus** in the *Manila Standard Today* newspaper is disguised as interview with a famous actress on motherhood. It starts off as an interview with the actress Dawn Zuleta-Lagdameo, talking about her inability to produce enough breastmilk for her baby boy. Lagdameo then metamorphoses into a brand ambassador when she revealed how when her child turned one, her search for the best toddler milk led her to **Gain Plus**. The way she enthuses about the product would put food technologists to shame. Lagdameo said, "*Gain Plus is a product of Abbott Nutritional International and has been tried and tested by paediatricians around the world. Reading the label, I found that the product has high fat content, unique and high-quality patented fat blend, Eye-Q Nutrition System (a special combination of brain nutrients – AA, DHA, taurine, choline and other nutrients). It also provides significant amounts of the essential fatty acids, linoleic acid and high nucleotide level. It has prebiotics (FOS) and probiotics (Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium).*" This actress knows her lines. (see 1)

- ❖ Dawn Zuleta again, this time beaming from a promotional sticker offering free Johnson & Johnson baby oil for every purchase of **Gain Plus**. (see 2)

- ❖ Sales reps distributed 30.5gm sachet samples of **Gain Plus Advance** growing-up milk (1-3 years) to hospital workers, despite being warned not to do so by the City Health Department in Makati. (see 3)



### The Dawn-ing of motherhood

Apart from playing a cornucopia of characters on television and the movies, Dawn Zuleta-Lagdameo enjoys playing a real-life role... mother to her and husband Anton's two-and-a-half-year-old first-born Jacobo. Entertainment editor **Isah V. Red** spent an afternoon with the doting mom talking, of all things, about being a mother.



AN IMAGE of Dawn Zuleta-Lagdameo with her back against the afternoon sun at a restaurant in The Fort would have been a perfect





# An IBFAN-ICDC spotlight on corporate marketing behaviour

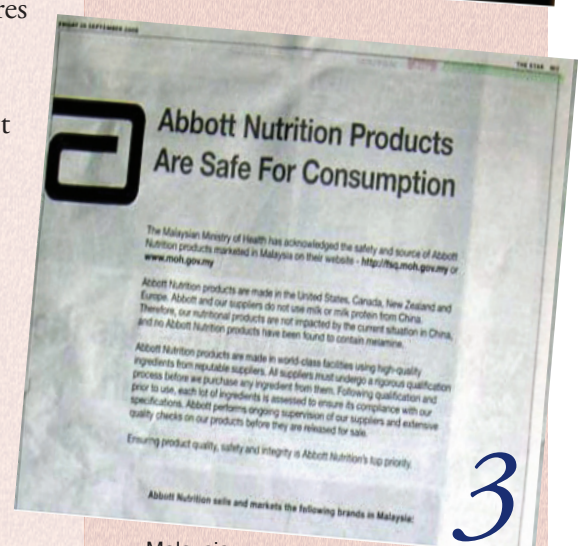
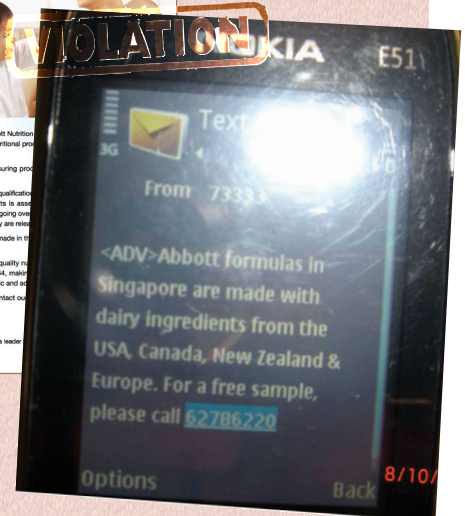
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## CASHING IN ON THE CHINA TAINTED MILK SCANDAL

*Independently of measures taken for implementation of the Code, manufacturers and distributors should ensure that their conduct at every level conforms to it. - Article 11.3 of the International Code.*

In the panic of the melamine contamination scandal in China, consumers spent huge sums on international brands. Multinational companies experienced unexpected sales surges, boosting their market share in many part of Asia. The appeal of premium international brands could be tied to the fact that these companies are in the forefront of advertising themselves as a safe and trusted alternative. In this regard, Abbott led the way by taking out expensive ads in major dailies and public places soon after the scandal broke to assure parents about the safety and quality of their products. How they go about it depends on the national measures which are in force.

- ❖ In Hong Kong where the International Code has not been implemented at all, the Abbott Ross ad is so promotional it amounts to a Code violation. The bear mascot holds an award for the Gain I/ Eye Q range of formula, which the ad claims are of “superior quality and safety” and have “gained” the trust of all parents. (see 1)
- ❖ In Singapore, where there is an industry-led voluntary Code, the ad is slightly more restrained but is still very promotional. The ad entitled “Quality at the Core of Abbott Nutrition” features a list of brand names with an idealising picture of worry-free moms, happy babies and toddlers to support the slogan. The ad was then followed by a cellphone text message from Abbott assuring recipients individually that Abbott formulas do not contain milk from China. There is also a number to call for free samples, a practice which is prohibited by the Code of Ethics on the Sale of Infant Foods in Singapore. (see 2)
- ❖ In Malaysia, where a stronger voluntary Code is actively overseen by the government, the ad is reduced to little more than bare information. Abbott’s ad is less flashy and gives plain facts – “Abbott Nutrition Products are safe for consumption” alongside a roll call of product names. (see 3)





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## IQ: is it Intelligence? Intestinal? or Eye?

Abbott's **IQ** stands for all

*Resolution WHA58.32 prohibits nutrition and health claims for breastmilk substitutes unless they are allowed by national/regional legislation. Abbott behaves as if this resolution does not exist. Here are three examples of how the company tries to persuade consumers to buy its products.*

- ❖ In the UAE, a bi-lingual booklet entitled “*Better Vision, Better Learning, Better Future*” found at a primary health centre proclaims in Arabic and in English “*Your baby’s performance ....The sky is the limit*” and shows how the IQ system of nutrients “*keep him strong and healthy*”. The long list of claims made about the IQ system of nutrients found in **Similac Gain Advance** and **Gain Plus Advance** are as follows:
  - DHA (docohexaenoic acid) – important for brain and eye development in infants that leads to improved mental and visual functions.
  - AA (arachidonic acid) – important for signalling in the nervous system; precursor for substances which are important for immunity, blood clotting and other functions.
  - Taurine – essential for brain and retina development; potential in auditory development.
  - Nucleotides – Essential for all cells in the body, including the immune system.
  - Choline – Important for learning and memory.
  - Additional energy – to meet your child’s increased energy needs.
  - Fat blend – 100 percent pure vegetable fat and free from palm oil providing high calcium absorption, better bone mineralization and better bone density for your child.
  - Iron – Helps to prevent anaemia that affects the child’s mental development and necessary to fuel brain growth.
  - A leaflet entitled “The perfect formula for maximum performance” promotes the same IQ System of Nutrients found in a range of Abbott products.
- (see 1)





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continued ...

- ❖ In Egypt, a leaflet entitled "Give early arrivals a strong start ..." targets parents of low-birth weight babies. Another pamphlet tells parents and doctors that such a 'strong start' begins "in hospitals and at home". Both propaganda pieces illustrate through hexagonal boxes and charts how the Eye/IQ system of nutrients contained in **Similac Neosure** makes it "the formula that performs" for premature and low birth weight infants. Idealising pictures of babies appear prominently. (see 2)

**Give early arrivals a strong start...**

**Special Formula for Special Babies**

**Similac<sup>®</sup> NeoSure<sup>™</sup> IQ**

Similac NeoSure IQ is the **ONLY** preterm discharge formula clinically shown to provide

- **Catch up growth<sup>1</sup>**  
 "...Catch up growth" should be expected and promoted in the 1<sup>st</sup> year of life.<sup>2</sup>  
 "...Growth was improved in infants fed Similac NeoSure IQ after hospital discharge to 12 months CA (corrected age).<sup>1</sup>
- **Immune response development<sup>4-7</sup>**  
 "...Uniquely fortified with a patented blend of nucleotides (TPAN).<sup>4</sup>  
 "...Clinically shown<sup>6</sup> to support the development of an infant's immune system more like the breast fed infants.<sup>5,6</sup>  
<sup>5</sup> Based on a clinical study in term infants with Similac Advance with added nucleotides. These nucleotides have been shown to help support development of an infant's immune system.
- **Visual and early language development<sup>8</sup>**  
 "...Whether or not formulas designed for the premature infant should be supplemented with long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids.<sup>8</sup>  
 "...AA/DHA improved visual acuity and early language development.<sup>8</sup>

- ❖ An ad in a scientific journal in Malaysia advertises **Similac Gain Advance** follow-up formula is positioned after a 4-page write-up on a talk that was co-presented by a rep from Abbott. Both the talk and ad claim (by way of charts) that mineral content and calcium absorptions are enhanced by using the product which contains the **Eye/IQ** systems of nutrients. (see 3)

**Give early arrivals a strong start...**

**Abbott**  
A Promise for Life

**Brain and Visual Development**

**Growth**

**Nucleotides**  
IgG IgA IgM IgE

**2**

**Similac Gain Advance IQ**

**Calcium for strong bones**

**VIOLATION**

**3**

**Calcium for strong bones**

**VIOLATION**

**Calcium for baby's needs<sup>1</sup>**

**Vegetable Oil blend<sup>2</sup> shown to promote significant gains in bone mineral density (BMD)<sup>3</sup>**

**Calcium absorption rates (%)**

Formula	Calcium absorption rates (%)
iQ	57.4%
Other oil blend formula	37.5%

**BMD (g/cm<sup>2</sup>)**

Formula	BMD (g/cm <sup>2</sup> )
iQ	0.28
Other oil blend formula	0.22

**Abbott Nutrition**



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## Promotion to the public and in shops

- Article 5.1 of the Code prohibits advertising and all other forms of promotion of products under the scope of the Code.
- Articles 5.2 and 5.4 of the Code prohibit companies from giving samples and gifts to mothers.
- Article 5.3 of the Code bans promotional devices at the retail level.

## Internet promotion and other mass media

- ❖ Abbott has partnered with baby food maker Beech-Nut Nutrition to provide new parents with infant and toddler parenting tips, tools and offers through the companies' websites. The two companies combine both parenting information and offers at the *StrongMoms.com* website. The partnership aims to offer new parents "additional support" to make the right feeding choices. Claiming to be "committed to giving infants and toddlers a strong start in life", the company announces that "Similac has a formula for every baby" and that "Each of the formulas in our line provides the balance of protein, minerals, and other nutrients that helps give babies a strong start in life. A baby's first year is so important, so count on Similac for nutrition you can trust." (see 1)
- ❖ Abbott's infant formula **Similac Advance Early Shield** introduced in 2008, is touted to be the only infant formula that has "a unique blend of prebiotics, nucleotides and antioxidants to support a baby's natural system". The slogan "Closer than ever to breastmilk" convinces mothers to buy the product. (see 2)
- ❖ In the UK, an ad promoting **Early Shield** in *Hello* magazine uses the catchphrase "You'll feed his imagination. We'll help feed his immune system", superimposed over a newborn's head. (see 3)
- ❖ In the US:
  - A video clip found on the *earlyshield.com* website shows a woman dressed as a doctor in a white coat inviting mothers "to check up the science behind the shield" to understand how **Similac Advance Early Shield** works. The website entices moms to sign up for *Strongmoms* (see entry 1 on pg 7) to get up to USD329 in offers.





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- Another similar ad featuring a newborn is found in People Magazine which states "Strong babies start here. While you protect her on the outside, we'll help protect her on the inside". (see 4)

4

- New mothers receive **Similac** formula samples delivered to their homes, with boxes bearing the slogan "Strong moms plan for great nutrition". (see 5)



5

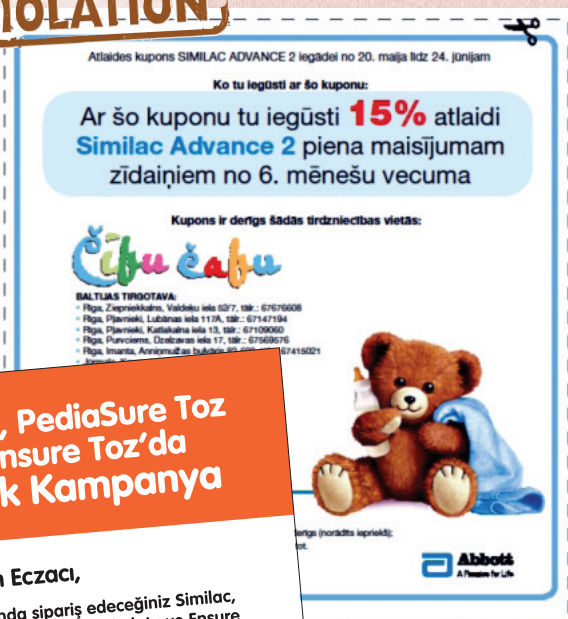


## Promotion in shops

- To induce mothers in Latvia to buy **Similac Advance 2**, discount coupons for up to 15% were made available. The coupon also leads mothers to a website where there are ads on the product. (see 6)

- Pharmacies in Turkey are given the offer to buy **Similac 1** and **Similac 2** in bulk. Any bulk purchase of 100 tins will receive the same number of tins free-of-charge effectively reducing the costs by half. The number of free tins increase with bigger orders. Since the deal to pharmacies will eventually be passed on the consumer at the retail level and is not meant to be a pricing policy on a long term basis, Article 5.3 of the International Code has the potential of being violated. A doctor who complained about this deal was threatened by the company's lawyer. (see 7)

**VIOLATION**



6

**Similac, PediaSure Toz ve Ensure Toz'da Büyük Kampanya**

**Sayın Eczacı,**

08 Mayıs - 31 Mayıs arasında sipariş edeceğiniz Similac, PediaSure Toz Vanilya, PediaSure Toz Çikolata ve Ensure Toz Vanilya ürünlerinde aşağıda belirtilen MF uygulaması yapılacaktır. Hak ettiğiniz mal fazlası ürünler siparişinizle birlikte sevk edilecektir.

**Bu fırsatı kaçırmayın...**

Similac 1 ve 2 (400 gr)	Similac 1 ve 2 (900 gr)	Similac 1 ve 2 Pratik Paket (10 Adet 29.4 gr)	PediaSure Toz Vanilya	PediaSure Toz Kakao	Ensure Vanilya Aromalı Toz (300 gr)
3 + 1	2 + 1	2 + 1	4 + 1	4 + 1	3 + 1
10 + 5	10 + 6	10 + 6	10 + 3	10 + 3	10 + 5
25 + 13	25 + 18	25 + 18	25 + 8	25 + 8	25 + 13
50 + 30	50 + 40	50 + 40	50 + 20	50 + 20	50 + 30
100 + 70	100 + 100	100 + 100	100 + 50	100 + 50	100 + 70

**Similac 2** **PediaSure** **ENSURE**

ABBOTT LABORATUVARLARI İTH. İHR. VE TİC. LTD. ŞTİ.  
DÜZCELER CAD. NO:1 HEDER PLAZA KAVAKLI - BEYOĞLU SİHİO İSTANBUL  
TEL: +90 212 530 15 54 FAKS: +90 212 426 35 39  
E-MAIL: +90 212 530 15 54  
Detaylı bilgi için: İstanbul: İbrahim Akın (İbraz Akın) E-mail: ibrahim.akin@abbott.com  
İstanbul: Ayhan Yılmaz ve Anıyay E-mail: anıyay@abbott.com  
İstanbul: Ayhan Yılmaz ve Anıyay E-mail: anıyay@abbott.com  
İstanbul: Ayhan Yılmaz ve Anıyay E-mail: anıyay@abbott.com

7

**Half-price!**

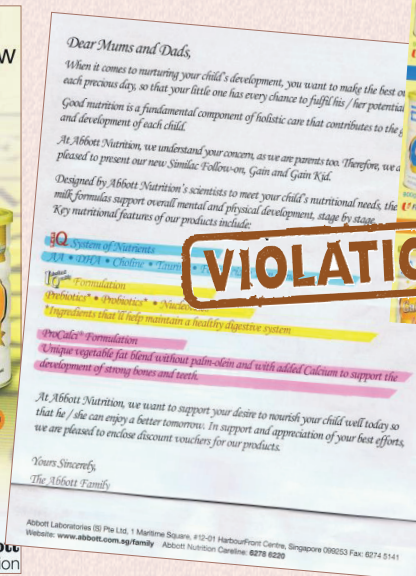
Buy 100 tins of **SIMILAC** formula, get the next 100 tin free!



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- ❖ A supermarket in Singapore offers discounts and free gifts as part of an Abbott campaign to promote **Similac 2** as *Singapore Mothers' No. 1 Choice*. Flyers with discount coupons were mailed out by Abbott to unsuspecting parents. A "Dear Mums and Dads" letter encouraged parents to use the vouchers to purchase **Similac 2**. (see 8)



8

9

- ❖ In Vietnam, a large Abbott signboard outside a grocer shows idealising images of a mother and baby and an extended family. The "1 Abbott" logo refers to "No. 1 milk" or infant formula and implies superiority. The slogans "Let Abbott be your First Choice" and "A Promise for Life" also appear on the signboard. The Vietnamese Decree #21/2006 prohibits advertising of breastmilk substitutes for babies 0-6 months. (see 9)





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## Promotion to health workers & health facilities

- Article 6.2 bans the promotion of products within the health care system.
  - Article 6.3 prohibits the display of products, placards and posters or the distribution of company materials unless requested or approved by the government.
  - Article 7.3 provides that there should be no financial or material inducement to promote products.
- ❖ This leaflet found at a health care establishment in China bears the catchphrase “Nutrition guaranteed” and details how **Isomil** soy formula reduces an infant's allergy and diarrhoea. A chart shows allergy resistance is better with Isomil compared to breastmilk. One of the references cited is an Abbott study which claims that soy formulas are “safe and effective alternatives for infants” running contrary to findings in independent research which shows that soy milk can be harmful to infants. (see 1)

## “I didn't know I was being used”

- ❖ After attending a Code monitoring course in Egypt, a doctor surrendered a fun mouse pad containing moveable brand names and pack shots of **Similac Gain** and **GainPlus** suspended in gel. Dragging a mouse across the surface causes the names and tins to swim about. The mouse pad carries the slogan “Feed your child's potential” and shows a picture of a mother and her child. The doctor said: “If I had only known that this and many other presents I received were for marketing purposes, I would have rejected this and many other useful presents – I didn't know I was being used”. (see 2)
- ❖ In a health facility in Egypt, a flyer on **Isomil** claims that it is the only soy formula in the world that can make claims of superiority such as “trusted nutrition for over 35 years”, “fed to more than 9 million babies” and “provides growth similar to that of breastfed babies”. (see 3)





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- ❖ In Latvia, a **Similac Advance** pamphlet accompanies an invitation for a medical conference. The pamphlet, intended only for medical workers, bears the slogan "*Similac Advance – worthy for development of your child's intellect*". (see 4)
- ❖ A private hospital in Malaysia receives boxes of **Similac** powdered and Ready To Feed infant formula on a regular basis, a practice prohibited by the Malaysia Code. (see 5)



- ❖ An ad in the American Association of Pediatrics (Aug 09) claims that Easyshield is "*Closer than ever to breastmilk*". (see 6)
- ❖ In Vietnam, a whiteboard provided by Abbott to a health facility bears the Abbott logo and the slogan "A Promise for Life". Although the whiteboard does not show a brand name, the Abbott logo is found on the labels of all products. (see 7)



This ad contains claims which are not allowed.



# An **IBFAN-ICDC** spotlight on corporate marketing behaviour



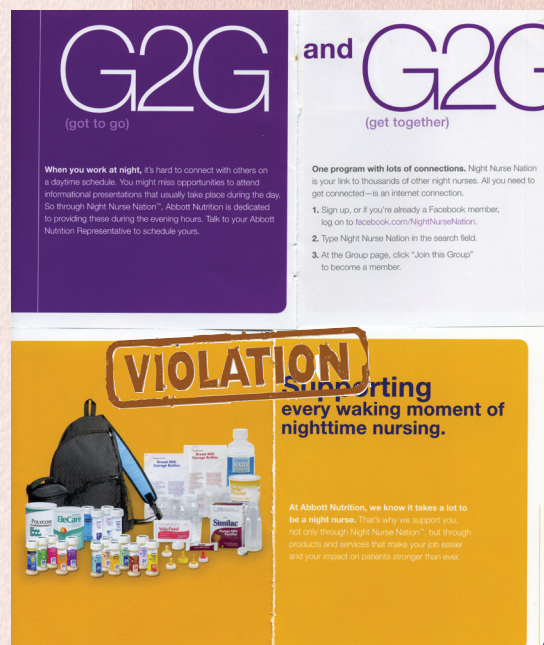
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## BRANCHING OUT NEW DIMENSIONS IN FORMULA MARKETING

- ❖ In the US, Abbott is pursuing a marketing strategy which enables them access to mothers and health professionals through activities disguised as support and educational services. These services earn the gratitude and loyalty of health workers who sign up for the service while mothers are being lured into accessing company-sponsored infant feeding information rather than relying on knowledgeable health care providers for help with breastfeeding.

### Night Nurse Nation

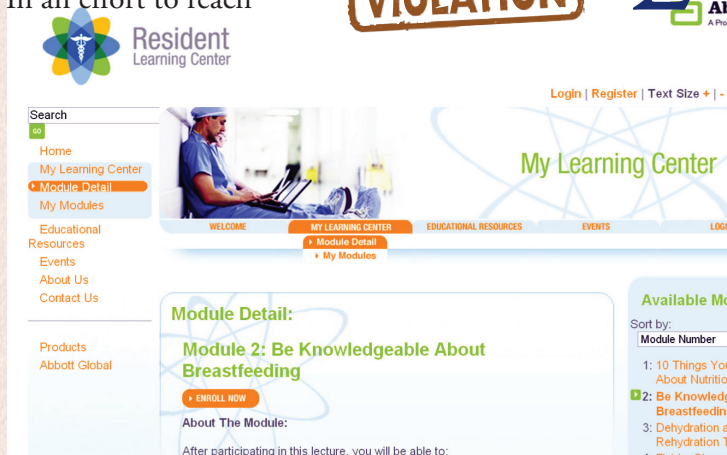
- Educational programs such as *Night Nurse Nation* are offered to night nurses who may be missing out on opportunities to attend Abbott-sponsored events. One promotional material *G2G* which stands for *Got to go* and *Get Together* stresses how difficult it is for night nurses to connect with others on a daytime schedule. Another promotional material entitled “*Supporting every waking moment of nighttime nursing*” states “*At Abbott Nutrition, we know it takes a lot to be a night nurse. That’s why we support you, not only through Night Nurse Nation, but through products and services that make your job easier and your impact on patients stronger than ever.*” Through this service, grateful night nurses are enlisted to help promote the use of formula at night. (see 1)



WHA resolutions 49.15 (1996) and 58.32 (2005) warn against conflicts of interest where financial support or other incentives are given for programmes and health professionals working in the area of infant and young child health.

### Resident Learning Center

- Although, there are numerous residency curricula available that are free of commercial influence, a Paediatric Resident Learning Center set up by Abbott Nutrition makes a strong push to reach health care providers to market its products. In an effort to reach paediatric residents and residency directors, Abbott has developed a free on-line paediatric nutrition curriculum (www.residentlearningcenter.com) that includes a module about breastfeeding. To view the program doctors must sign up and agree to allow Abbott to use their name and affiliation in its marketing efforts for the programme. Residents deserve top notch education on breastfeeding not infant formula commercials. (see 2)



Source: Branching Out: New Dimensions in Infant Formula Marketing, NABA, 2010



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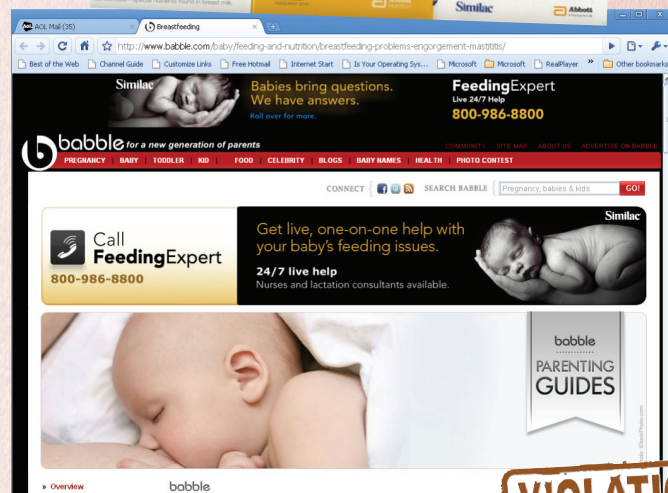
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## Feeding Expert

- Abbott urges staff nurses to pass out contact information for mothers to call to obtain breastfeeding help from minimally trained employees (not IBCLC certified lactation consultants as the pamphlet implies) through an Abbott-sponsored programme. (see 3)
- Paediatric practices in the US advertise the free “Feeding Expert” hotline. When a breastfeeding mother calls this number she is connected to an employee of a company called LifeCare which provides worksite support services who has taken a one week on-line breastfeeding. “Feeding Expert” also shows up on major parenting websites. (see 4)



- A hospital-distributed pamphlet with the same baby image as “Feeding Expert” uses the tagline “While you protect her on the outside, we’ll help protect her on the inside” to promote Similac. The pamphlet offers a 75% discount on formula if parents order a case of 2 oz. bottles. (see 5)
- Babble.com was enticed into displaying a large section on breastfeeding sponsored by Abbott. It featured a rather unhelpful breastfeeding guide which has been taken down following a storm of protest. Babble now has a large ad for Abbott’s service, promising free access to nurses and lactation consultants. However the lactation consultants are not IBCLC credentialed. (see 6)





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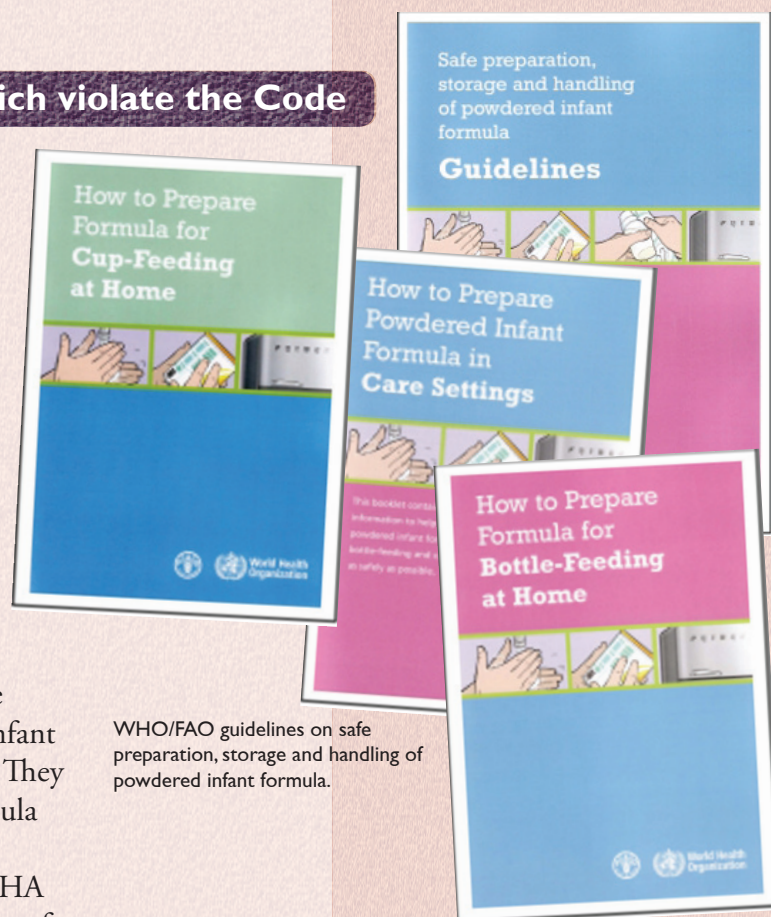
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## Misleading text and pictures which violate the Code

- Article 4.2 requires all information material to advocate for breastfeeding and not contain pictures or text which idealise the use of breastmilk substitutes.
- For health professionals, Article 7.2 of the Code allows only product information that is factual and scientific.
- WHA resolution 58.32 (2005) prohibits nutrition and health claims unless specifically provided for in national legislation.

WHA resolution 58.32 [2005] advises that health workers and parents must be provided with enough information and training on the preparation, use and handling of powdered infant formula in order to minimise health hazards. They must be informed that powdered infant formula may contain pathogenic microorganisms and must be prepared and used appropriately. WHA resolution 61.20 [2008] urges implementation of the WHO/FAO guidelines on safe preparation, storage and handling of powdered infant formula in order to minimize the risk of bacterial infection.

- ❖ On its website (<http://similac.com/baby-formula/bottle-preparation-and-storage-powder>, accessed 28 January 2010) Abbott instructions on “How to prepare formula” advises parents to bring cold water to a rolling boil, and then to let the water cool to room temperature before adding to formula. This is contrary to the WHO/FAO guidelines on safe preparation, storage and handling of powdered infant formula which advises formula to be added to water at or above 70 °C (and then cool it down). (see 1)



WHO/FAO guidelines on safe preparation, storage and handling of powdered infant formula.



Abbott's How to prepare infant formula webpage (accessed 3 March 2010)



# An IBFAN-ICDC report on baby food marketing practices



This page forms part of the global monitoring report – Breaking the Rules, Stretching the Rules 2010. Companies' marketing behaviour is measured against the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and WHA resolutions.

- ❖ Using famous artists in China, a leaflet shows UNICEF ambassador and celebrated pianist Lang Lang promoting an Abbott product. In a clever twist, no product name is shown except the TPAN (Total Potentially Available Nucleotides) content in Gain Advance Eye/IQ formulas. Abbott claims TPAN helps strengthen a baby's developing immune system. To get parents to buy the product, Abbott harps on the premise that nurture is more important than nature by having Lang Lang say "my success is not born, thanks to my folk's parenting". At the back of the leaflet is the statement that Abbott is the world leader in nutrition. (Lang Lang also featured in another ad on **Gain Plus Advance** – see report under Stretching the Rules). (see 2)



Article 8 of the Chinese Regulation requires information materials to advocate for breastfeeding and not be distributed without permission of health administration departments.

- ❖ In Malaysia, this advertisement from the Journal of Paediatrics, Obstetrics & Gynaecology uses an image of a dancing couple and the catchy slogan "it takes two to tango" to describe how the Dual Carbohydrate System works in Similac LF's which purportedly results in faster energy absorption which helps prevent prolonged episodes of diarrhoea. The statement 'Breastmilk is best for infants' is overshadowed by the promotional image and text. Article 4.6 of the 2008 Malaysian Code of Ethics for the Marketing of Infant Foods and Related Products forbids the advertising of infant formula products in the media. Only vetted scientific and educational materials, not advertisements may be distributed to health professionals. (see 3)

**VIOLATION**

It Takes Two to Tango!

3

It takes **DUAL CARBOHYDRATE SYSTEM** to make it work!

From birth to 1 year

**Similac LF**

Similac® LF is a cow's milk-based, lactose free formula fortified with a dual carbohydrate system (corn syrup solid and sucrose). The combination of two carbohydrates capitalizes on the fact that different enzymes are responsible for the digestion of various oligosaccharides. Therefore, the dual carbohydrate system results in faster energy absorption and helps to prevent prolonged episodes of diarrhea. By providing adequate level of essential nutrients, Similac® LF supports normal growth just as efficiently as standard cow's milk-based formulas.

**Similac LF Supports RECOVERY from diarrhea**

**Breast milk is the best milk for infants**

Breastfeeding should be initiated within one hour of delivery so as to stimulate better lactation. Breast milk contains many benefits that only breast milk can confer on infants. Breast milk is immediately available and no kitchen preparation is required. Breast milk requires no preparation and is hassle free. Should mothers decide to supplement breastfeeding with an infant formula or not to breastfeed, they should consult their doctor before commencing the use of infant formula. It is important for mothers to have a well balanced diet both during pregnancy and lactation. Working mothers may breastfeed while at home and feed their babies expressed breast milk while at work. It is important to remember once a decision is made to stop breastfeeding, it is difficult to reverse.

References: 1. Kerner B et al. Pediatric Research 1983; 17(4):191A. 2. Lasekan JB et al. FASEB Journal 1999;13(3). Abstract K294

08-KK/B/P/1-23/07 (UNTUK PROFESIONAL PERUBATAN)

ABBOTT LABORATORIES (M) SDN BHD (163660-X)  
No. 22, Jalan Pemaja 1/115, Seksyen 1/1, 14com-Glenmarie Industrial Park, 40150 Shah Alam, Selangor D.E., Malaysia.  
TOLL FREE: 1-800-88-6233 (Mon to Fri, 9.00am to 6.00pm)

**Abbott Nutrition**



# An **IBFAN-ICDC** report on baby food marketing practices



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## Labels

- Article 9 of the Code requires labels to NOT discourage breastfeeding and inform about the correct use of the product, the risk of misuse and abide by a number of other points.
- WHA resolution 54.2 (2001) advises exclusive breastfeeding for six months which means that the recommended age for use of complementary foods cannot be under six months.

- ❖ In Brazil, Rosco bear made a reappearance on infant formula labels, this time in a pose resembling a sleeping baby, after years of compliance with the Brazilian law which prohibits humanised images on formula labels.

The obligatory Ministry of Health notice in the main panel of the label is not in contrasting colors or in a font identical to that used for the product designation, as required under Brazil's Technical Regulation for Labelling of Packaged Foods.

- ❖ The plastic lid of infant formula cans of Abbott formula in Vietnam has stickers and with the Abbott logo and name, a drawing of the human brain with the word "intelligent" superimposed over it. Promoters clad in Abbott t-shirts push Abbott products by telling parents that babies fed on Similac and Gain will become 'hyper intelligent' as stated on the label. They also undermine local milks, saying they are contaminated with dioxins and pesticides.



Look carefully! The word 'Thong Minh' which stands for intelligence is actually emblazoned on an image of a brain.



# An **IBFAN-ICDC** report on baby food marketing practices



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## The Code in emergencies

The *Infant Feeding in Emergencies Operational Guidance* available at [www.enonline.net](http://www.enonline.net) incorporates and builds upon key provisions of the Code to respond to challenges that emergencies pose to infant feeding. It advises that *donations of bottles and teats should be refused in emergency situations. Any well-meant but ill-advised donations of breastmilk substitutes, bottles and teats should be placed under the control of a single designated agency. For infants who have to be fed on breastmilk substitutes, the Guidance recommends that staff purchase products locally and choose brands that are labelled in a language that may be understood by the users and whose label is in compliance with the other requirements of the International Code. In some cases products may need to be re-labelled prior to distribution. The Guidance also stipulates conditions that reduce the dangers of artificial feeding.*

Resolution WHA 47.5 [1994] recommends that donated supplies be given in emergency situations only if all the following conditions apply:

- infants have to be fed on breastmilk substitutes;
- the supply is continued for as long as the infants concerned need it; and
- the supply is not used as a sales inducement.

In the aftermath of the January 2010 earthquake in Haiti, Abbott announced it was providing \$2.5 million in grant funding and donations of critical pharmaceutical and nutritional products to humanitarian aid organisations. Abbott announced that it works with these organisations to identify and distribute critical nutritional and pharmaceutical products to provide immediate relief for people affected by the earthquake in Haiti. It is not known if these organisations subscribe to the UN-endorsed Emergency Guidelines drawn up by the Emergency Nutrition Network. Doubtful, because in November 2008, one of Abbott's main humanitarian partners, Direct Relief International with Abbott's approval, offered to "drop-ship" from Hong Kong two 40 foot containers consisting of 1,100 cases of GAIN each to flood-prone Fiji. ICDC knows the product to be a follow-up formula but the offer letter stated that product was for babies under 6 months. At that point, the shelf life of the products was about 6 months. The Ministry of Health in Fiji wisely decided not to accept the 'Gain Aid' to keep Fiji and the Pacific "dump free".



Box packed with formula and ready to ship to Haiti !  
Inset: Tins of formula including Similac and Neosure.

Image from <http://haitirescuecenter.wordpress.com/2009/08/03/semi-container-for-fall-2009/> Accessed 10 Feb. 2010.



# Stretching the Rules

This page highlights marketing practices which undermine or discourage breastfeeding especially those relating to products which may not come under the scope of the Code. Sponsorship activities which may give rise to conflicts of interest are also reported here. These activities are intended to promote breastmilk substitutes even though they are not Code violations.

The aggressive promotional tactics for growing-up milks and other products which are not within the scope of the Code indirectly promote infant and follow-on formulas bearing the same (or similar) names and logos. These practices undermine breastfeeding.

- ❖ In China, an ad for **Gain Plus Advance** announces a tie-in with Discovery Channel for a 22-episode TV series which answers parents' concerns about raising children-- the screen shots show parents with babies and toddlers with Abbott ambassador Lang Lang making an appearance. (see 1)

- ❖ In Honduras, Abbott offers to pay registration fees for doctors at the *1er Congreso Interamericano de Pediatra* (1st American Congress of Pediatrics). (see 2)

VALOR	
MEDICO ESPECIALISTA	L. 1,000
MEDICOS GENERALES	L.800
ESTUDIANTES, ENFERMERAS Y PARAMEDICOS	L.500

TE INVITAN

Abbott A Promise for Life

CONTACTOS: JENNIFER SANCHEZ 998-8013 / 445-1227 SOM. RGATANIEYAHOO.COM JORGE FRANCO 998-8004 / 445-1080 JAN.FRANCO@HOTMAIL.COM



Look! A kid with a PhD cap, thanks to Gain.

- ❖ In Hong Kong, a TV ad Gain Plus 3 demonstrates how it is daddy's and mummy's duty to ensure that the potential of every child potential is fully unleashed. Of course, help is needed from Abbott's 'PhD' (phospholipid), a component found in Gain Plus. (see 3)



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## ❖ In Malaysia:

- An ad for **Isomil Plus Eye/IQ** soy milk for children 1 to 10 years old, entitled “*Equal in Performance*” claims the product is formulated to give your child equal opportunity to flourish, even with a problem like cow’s milk protein allergy. (see 4)
- A brochure announces by referring to a number of studies how there is poor prognosis for children to outgrow cow’s milk protein (CMPA) allergy. There was no mention of breastfeeding which prevents CMPA in most cases. On the other side, a big pack shot of **Isomil Plus Eye/IQ** together with the slogan “*The Preferred Choice for CMPA*” appears. So one side flags the problem, the other promotes a solution for it! Another more scientific and factual brochure on food allergy is also available in the hospitals but again there is no mention of the superiority of breastfeeding. (see 5)



- Another brochure on soy entitled *Soy for Life* explains how soy-based formulas which are initially developed for children with cow’s milk intolerance are safe and actually have a long story of overcoming digestive and allergic diseases in children. An ad for Isomil Plus Eye/IQ appears at the back of the brochure to explain how “*now your child has an equal opportunity to thrive*” despite suffering from cow’s milk protein allergy. There was no mention of breastfeeding which prevents CMPA in most cases. (see 6)





# Stretching the Rules

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## ❖ In the UAE:

- Ballpoint pens with the **GainPlus Eye/IQ** brand name on one side and the Abbott Nutrition company logo clearly visible on the other side – no matter how the pen is held, promotion of Abbott is unhindered! These pens were widely distributed at a paediatric conference in Sharjah in the UAE. (see 7)
- Parents attending a mother and child show in Dubai, UAE, are provided with a gift pack containing a **Gain Plus Advance** sample, colouring book and crayons and an information booklet entitled in Arabic and in English entitled “*Infant and toddler development: What parents should know*”. The booklet indirectly promotes Abbott infant and follow-up formulas via promotion of ingredients found in the formulas and the Rosco bear logos found on the labels of these products. (see 8)



8



- A shop offers free baby wipes with two cans of Gain Plus Advanced. (see 9)

9

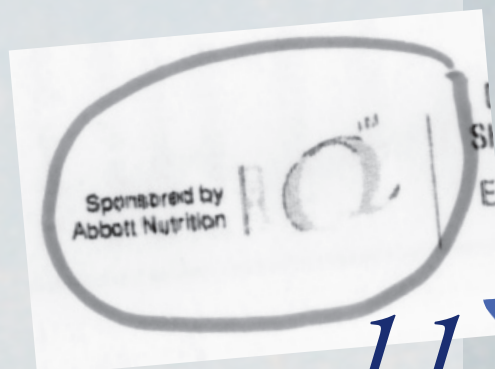


- The reception area of a professional conference is used as a platform for pushing **Similac** formulas for all ages. (see 10)

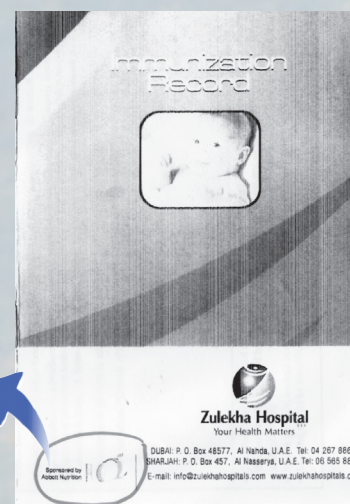


10

- ❖ An immunisation record booklet at the Zulekha Hospital in Sharjah is sponsored by Abbott Nutrition and clearly promotes the IQ system found in their products. (see 11)



11





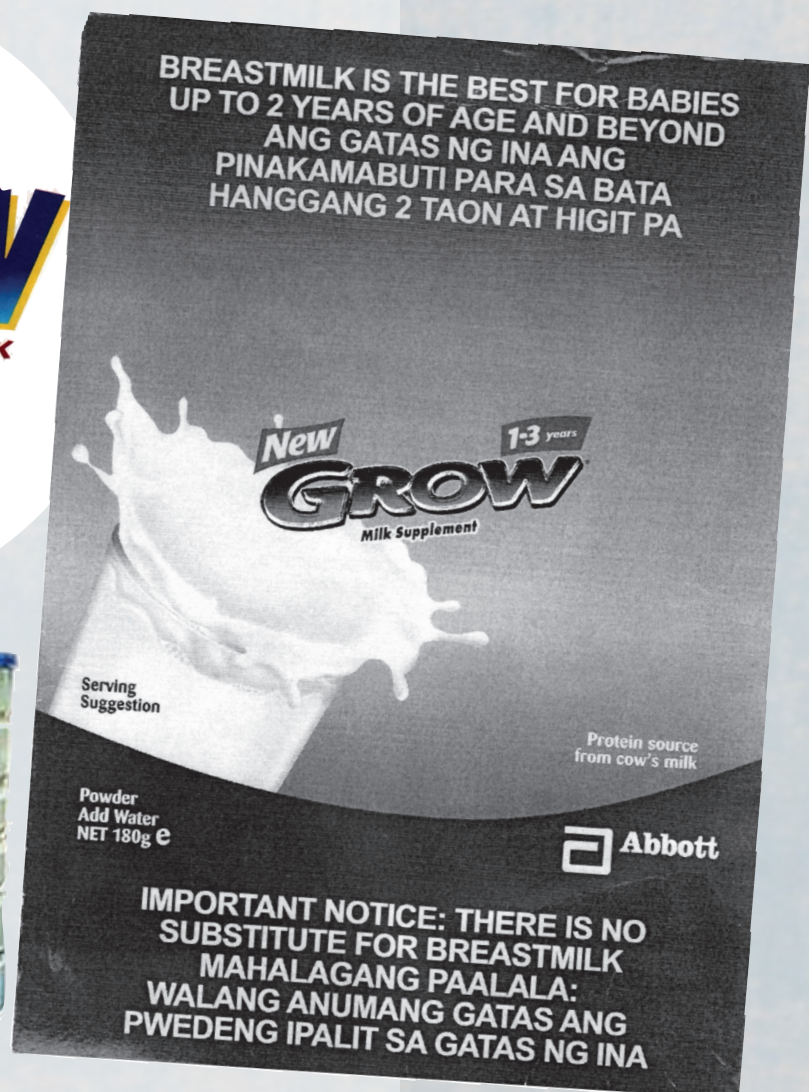
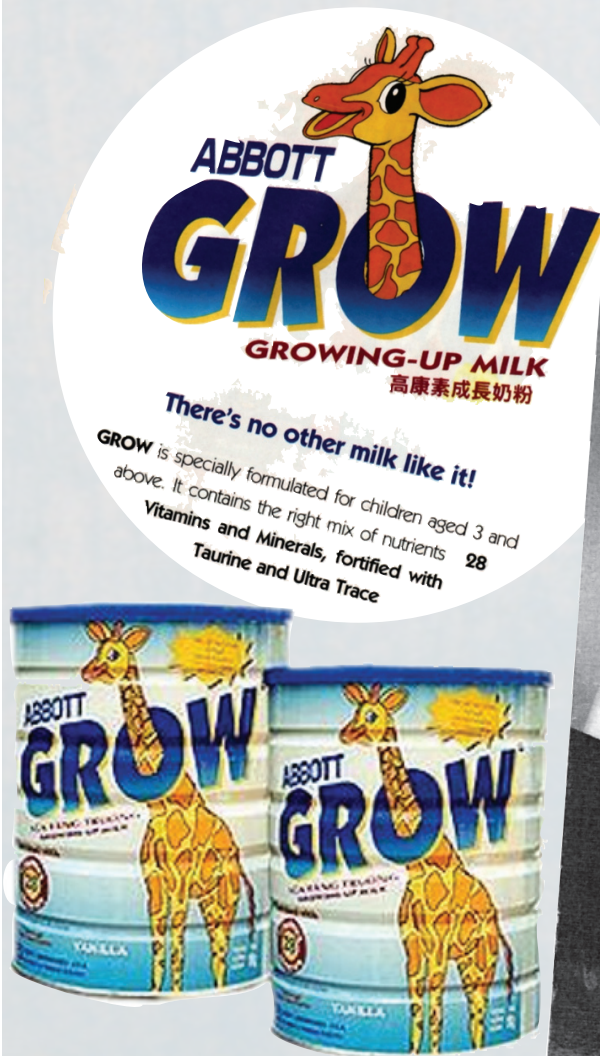
# Stretching the Rules

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## One positive example

Grow, a growing up milk for children 1 to 3 years was launched early 2010 in the Philippines. Following the Philippine Rules and Regulations in existence at the time of writing, Abbott cleans up the label by removing the giraffe mascot found in Grow for older children. There still are complaints about the very idealistic brand name – **Grow** – but this is a step forward. This happens when countries implement and enforce their laws and ICDC celebrates corporate compliance every time it happens.

Now you see it, now you don't: The giraffe mascot as seen on **Grow** milks for children 3 years and above (left) which is conspicuously absent on **Grow** milks for children 1-3 years in compliance with Filipino law.





**JUST IN**

# An IBFAN-ICDC report on baby food marketing practices

This page contains information received after the company report was finalised.



## IS THIS SCIENTIFIC AND FACTUAL?

**VIOLATION**

**O desenvolvimento neurológico dos lactentes nos dois primeiros anos de vida é acelerado. Por isso, eles necessitam de uma oferta abundante de ácidos graxos poliinsaturados de cadeia longa (DHA e AA) para o adequado desenvolvimento e funcionamento do sistema nervoso central. A baixa disponibilidade destes ácidos graxos pode comprometer o desenvolvimento neuropsicomotor dos lactentes.<sup>1</sup>**

**Abbott Nutrition desenvolveu o exclusivo Sistema IQ de Nutrientes que contribui para o desenvolvimento mental e visual dos lactentes.<sup>1-10</sup>**

**Isomil Advance**  
Infantil de Soja IQ

Chegou Isomil Advance com LcPufas (DHA e AA) e exclusivo Sistema IQ de nutrientes.

A confiança e efetividade que você conhece ficou ainda melhor.

Agora também em dois estágios, específico para as necessidades dos lactentes

Referências: 1. Von S. Fetal and neonatal development of long-chain polyunsaturated fatty acids. J Pediatr. 2003;143(5):51-6. 2. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 3. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 4. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 5. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 6. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 7. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 8. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 9. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006. 10. Neuhoff M, Connor W, Bannai L, Lusk S. Biochemical and functional effects of prenatal and postnatal omega-3 fatty acid deficiency on retina and brain development. J Biol Chem. 2003;278(12):30000-30006.

Promotion in the guise of scientific and factual information

- ❖ In Brazil, a double page spread in the *Journal de Pediatria* (Vol. 86 No. 4, July/August 2010), the journal of the Brazilian Paediatric Society trumpets the ‘arrival’ of **Isomil Advance** infant formula. Using an idealising picture of a mother and baby on the right panel, the ad’s headline says in Portuguese “*Chégo Isomil Advance com LcPufas (DHA e AA) e exclusivo Sistema IQ de nutrientes*” (*It has arrived! Isomil Advance with LCPufas (DHA & AA) – an exclusive IQ system of nutrients*). It then continues with the slogan “*The confidence and efficacy known to you are now even better.*”

The left panel delves into scientific descriptions of the neurological development of infants in the first 2 years of life and the essential role of fatty acids. The true intent of the ad is revealed when the ad explains the consequences of lack of fatty acids on baby’s brain development, with the obvious solution being the IQ/Eye Q system of nutrients with fatty acid content found in **Isomil Advance**.

Law No. 11265/2006 of Brazil prohibits the commercial promotion of infant formula. Scientific and technical materials are allowed.