

"Free" booklets aren't free

A colleague asked, "What's wrong with breastfeeding literature published by a formula company? It's "free."

No, it isn't.

It's tempting to look at the quality of the booklet only. There are major flaws of omission and commission in every industry-published piece I've ever seen. Evaluating the piece carefully can be instructional anyway, but there's a larger principle here.

"Free" materials are not free, ever. Someone paid the writer, graphic artist, print shop, engineer, etc. to develop these materials, and the costs must be recovered. From where/who does the source plan to recover the costs of the booklet? Not from breastfeeding women whose own milk competes with manufactured products for market share (as described in industry sales training programs).

The answer is from people who buy the products: (1) Moms who can't, won't, shouldn't, and just plain don't breastfeed. (2) From taxpayers (you and me) whose taxes buy the formula for the WIC program. (3) From those running homeless shelters, food banks, and other hunger programs. One company recently raised prices for their products - possibly to cover the cost of this and other booklets. Using a "free" booklet from a formula company means increasing the financial burden on bottlefeeding mothers, taxpayers, and those who financially support hunger agencies. Is this a good idea?

The cold, hard fact is that formula companies produce "breastfeeding materials" for one purpose only - to increase sales of their products. Any other purpose would be illegal and stupid. It's a matter of economics.

Colleagues, please "vote with your wallet" and purchase educational materials from sources without conflict of interest.

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