AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS
REPORT
COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION
Ethics and Etiquette in Advertising
A Statement of Principles for Judging the Suitability of Advertising of Nutritional Products

The Committee on Nutrition has been designated by the Executive Board of the American Academy of Pediatrics to serve in a consultative capacity in determining the suitability of advertisements of nutritional products in the official publications of the Academy.

Understanding between industry and the medical profession will be fostered by a readily available statement of the basis upon which judgment of advertisements of nutritional products will be made. Assurance can be given that this will be applied objectively, fairly and with sympathetic understanding of the position of industry.

It is hoped that thereby this statement can assume the status of a Code of Ethics and Etiquette in the promotion of products intended for maintenance of optimal nutrition or treatment of disorders of nutrition in infancy, childhood and adolescence.

The Committee on Nutrition will remain receptive to counsel from all sources, and sensitive to the implications of its own statements and actions. The following principles will be continuously re-examined in the light of experience and pertinent evidence.

Good Advertising
Good advertising serves the interest of both merchant and consumer. Good advertising begins with a reliable product. Good advertising achieves a pleasant informative memory of the product and its usefulness in the mind of the consumer.

In short, this implies an honest product, truthfully and artistically advertised. Honesty is the best cornerstone upon which to build the type of promotion that will serve the mutual interest of industry, the consumer, and the medical profession.

Quality of the Product
Proof of quality of the product must at all times be available to those who must evaluate promotional material. This applies to foods and to individual ingredients such as vitamins, minerals, amino acids, fatty acids, etc.

Name of Product
To be informative the common or scientific name of the product should be clearly indicated; this is especially important when a fanciful trade name is used. If the product contains several ingredients these should be enumerated.
Properties and Usefulness of a Product

The properties and usefulness of a product, when described, should be told in language appropriate to the intended audience. For example, when the audience consists chiefly of pediatricians the properties and usefulness of a product should be described in precise meaningful terms commonly employed by that professional group.

Promotion by Implication

It is appreciated that intentionally or unintentionally some advertising may create false impressions and implications through association, quotation out of context, or for other reasons. It is furthermore understood that there will be differences of opinion concerning the presence or absence of false implications, but in such cases it is believed that after due consideration the Committee on Nutrition should be the final arbiters.

Comparative Claims

Good advertising does not make inaccurate or improper comparisons between similar products. Rather, we believe that good advertising promotes a product on its own merits without resorting to comparisons.

Relative Sales Position

Relative sales position or the fact that the product has long been in the market should not be used to discredit improperly a newer product or one that has a smaller sales volume. The quality of a product is not necessarily linked to time or sales position.

Evidence

Advertising claims must be in keeping with cogent scientific evidence or with authoritative opinion of regularly organized qualified authorities. The merits of any wholesome food or of any nutrient which has a significant role in human metabolic processes need no false embellishment.

Superlatives

The use of superlatives in advertising is discouraged and will be considered suitable only when accompanied by proof of accuracy.

Testimonials

The use of testimonials in advertising is not looked upon with favor because they are so frequently obtained from persons unqualified, by training or experience, to express authoritative opinion or judgments on the subject. Personal testimonials, if used, must be accompanied by the written permission of the writer and adequate evidence that the writer is a qualified authority in the field of his testimony and the statements made are documented satisfactorily. The final judgment concerning qualifications of authorities under such circumstances, must rest with the Committee on Nutrition. Unelaborated references to “personal communications” are unsuitable.

Vague Claims

Vague claims of usefulness such as “hospital-tested,” “doctors recommend” and others, which suggest use or endorsement by professional groups or institutions, are regarded as misleading and are unsuitable. On the other hand, documented statements concerning such things as the use, the properties or the qualities of a product may be accepted when they are based on specific studies by qualified workers and documented by specific references to the scientific literature.

Committee on Nutrition

American Academy of Pediatrics, Inc.


July 9, 1956
COMMITTEE ON NUTRITION: Ethics and Etiquette in Advertising

Pediatrics 1956;18:509

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