

## Request for all exhibitors at the University of Cape Town Paediatric Refresher Course to abide by Regulation 991 of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 54 of 1972

### 1. **Motivation:**

The University of Cape Town's annual Paediatric Refresher Course is highly regarded by health professionals and paediatricians in both the private and public sector. It therefore concerns us that industry has used this as an opportunity to promote breastmilk substitutes (BMS) in a way that is not compliant with the International Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes, Regulation 991 and the National Department of Health's Guidelines for Industry on Regulation 991.

As a leading department of Paediatrics on the continent, we have a special responsibility to use this platform to promote interventions that have a positive impact on the health of children. The 2016 Lancet series noted that breastfeeding is one of the most effective means to reduce child mortality and morbidity;<sup>1</sup> and expressed concern around how the aggressive marketing of BMS is undermining efforts to improve breastfeeding. The series authors therefore called on health professional associations to adopt codes of conduct that actively promote breastfeeding, and protect it by supporting the International Code on the Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes.<sup>2</sup>

In 2012 the South African government promulgated Regulation 991 to regulate the marketing of BMS in South Africa. This includes strict guidelines around industry sponsorship of conferences and scientific meetings – as stipulated in the attached Regulations and Guidelines published by the National Department of Health. Yet despite requesting industry sponsors of the Refresher Course to comply with R991, we have noted ongoing violations of both the Code and R991. The Department of Paediatrics and Child Health therefore intends to take a firm stand against the inappropriate, illegal and unethical promotion of BMS, as this may harm the reputation of the Department, the Health Sciences Faculty, the University of Cape Town, and Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital.

2. **Our expectations:** The Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, University of Cape Town, expects all exhibition stands, promotional, educational and scientific material to be *fully compliant* with [Regulation 991 of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act 54 of 1972](#) and the associated [Guidelines to Industry and Health Care Personnel](#) issued by the National Department of Health; AND *with the spirit of* [the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes](#) adopted by the World Health Assembly of the World Health Organization in 1981.

### 3. **Right to review materials:**

We reserve the right to review and approve any exhibition stands, pamphlets, websites or other promotional and educational materials that are being used to promote and/or share scientific information about the range of breastmilk substitutes and designated products as defined in section 1 of Regulation 991.

### 4. **Consequences of non-compliance:**

Should the above materials *in our view* be in violation of Regulation 991, we will a) distance ourselves publicly from the exhibit, and b) report the violation to National Department of Health.

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<sup>1</sup> Victora, CG et al. (2016) Breastfeeding in the 21st century: epidemiology, mechanisms, and lifelong effect. *The Lancet*, 387(10017): 475-49

<sup>2</sup> Rollins NC et al (2016) Why invest, and what it will take to improve breastfeeding practices? *The Lancet*, 387(10017): 491- 504