

Food industry partnerships may carry risks

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Health charities and health organizations must tread carefully when partnering with the food industry as it may risk compromise health promotion goals, states an editorial in *CMAJ (Canadian Medical Association Journal)*.

Partnerships with major food companies are attractive for health charities and organizations because they bring additional funding and support. For the [food industry](#), these relationships can help burnish their brands, support marketing efforts and help with lobbying but they may obscure the very messages that health organizations are promoting.

"Corporations are not the problem," write Drs. Paul Hébert, Editor-in-Chief, CMAJ and Yoni Freedhoff, Medical Director, Bariatric Medical Institute, Ottawa. "By definition, corporate spending must serve to increase shareholder value — a transparent fiduciary requirement that should encompass philanthropic efforts. Health organizations, even when desperate for money or resources, should avoid co-branding with the food industry."

At a minimum, partnerships should be arms length with limitations on how corporations can use health organizations' branding.

"Obesity is a pressing public health concern worldwide," write the authors. "The epidemic is primarily fuelled by the consumption of excess calories, including healthy ones — a message that will not resonate with corporate sponsors. When they partner, health organizations become inadvertent pitchmen for the food industry."

Provided by Canadian Medical Association Journal

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