

# Examining pediatricians' interactions with infant formula companies

March 1 2023

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Most pediatricians reported receiving a visit (85%) from an infant formula company representative and free formula samples (90%). These visits could influence the advice pediatricians give to mothers who had

planned to exclusively breastfeed, according to a new study published in the peer-reviewed journal *Breastfeeding Medicine*.

Kelly Werner, MD, MHS, from Columbia University Vagelos College of Physicians and Surgeons, and co-authors, distributed an electronic survey to U.S. pediatricians asking about interactions with [infant formula](#) companies and [breastfeeding](#) practices.

The investigators found that infant formula company representatives were more likely to visit and sponsor meals for pediatricians at private practices and in higher-income, suburban areas, which also had higher exclusive breastfeeding rates.

In an accompanying editorial, Arthur I. Eidelman, MD, Editor-in-Chief of *Breastfeeding Medicine*, quotes a recent statement of the American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Bioethics on the subject of the potential influence of product promotion on physician decision making process:

"The marketing divisions of pharmaceutical and medical device firms view health care clinicians as targets of their efforts, and some of the interactions that occur between the industry and health care clinicians have the potential to alter decision making in ways that may not necessarily benefit patients. Health care clinicians have an ethical duty to recognize situations and [marketing strategies](#) that are designed to influence their choice of diagnostic and therapeutic options for their patients. At a minimum, health care clinicians should be aware of the techniques used to attempt to alter their behavior and guard against them."

Dr. Eidelman adds, "We should be concerned regarding the potential negative impact secondary to the interaction of manufacturers' representatives with physicians in practice, remembering that 'there are

no free lunches' and that in the end, someone pays the bill."

**More information:** Study: Kelly M. Werner et al, Pediatricians' Reports of Interaction with Infant Formula Companies, *Breastfeeding Medicine* (2023). [DOI: 10.1089/bfm.2022.0217](https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2022.0217)

Editorial: Arthur I. Eidelman, The Impact of Formula Marketing on Breastfeeding Support: "There Are No Free Lunches," *Breastfeeding Medicine* (2023). [DOI: 10.1089/bfm.2023.29237.editorial](https://doi.org/10.1089/bfm.2023.29237.editorial)

Provided by Mary Ann Liebert, Inc

Citation: Examining pediatricians' interactions with infant formula companies (2023, March 1) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-03-pediatricians-interactions-infant-formula-companies.html>

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