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For immediate release

**Formula companies mislead health professionals**  
*Doctor calls for healthy skepticism regarding infant formula promotion*

Director of Healthy Skepticism, Dr Peter Mansfield, has called on health professionals to question the promotion and marketing of artificial baby milk (infant formula).

Dr Mansfield believes misleading strategies used to promote prescription pharmaceuticals are also being used to market artificial breastmilk substitutes to midwives, child health nurses and General Practitioners.

As infant formula companies are not allowed to advertise directly to consumers, formula manufacturers market their product at seminars and conferences attended by health professionals who work with mothers and babies.

Dr Mansfield wants to draw a distinction between on-going education, and seminars that are often accompanied by free meals, movie tickets, pens, clocks, and other gifts.

“The difference between ‘education’ and ‘promotion’ is that these companies have a clear idea of what they want doctors to do: prescribe their products. Education presents information so the individual can decide themselves,” Dr Mansfield said.

Dr Mansfield argues like pharmaceutical companies, infant formula manufacturers appeal to a health professional’s genuine desire to make rational decisions based on their patient’s best interests.

“Gifts are given to get access to health professionals—salespeople then use their skills to convince them their product is a logical choice.

“Often when I raise these issues, doctors are defensive. They feel they’re being accused of betraying the patient for a token or a trinket. But at the same time, they feel a sense of reciprocal obligation; it would be rude not to listen to the sales spiel,” said Dr Mansfield.

“Doctors are human, and are influenced by promotion. We don’t have enough data on midwives and nurses to know whether they’re human or not, but if they are, they are vulnerable to misleading promotion and advertising.”

Dr Peter Mansfield is a General Practitioner and the director of Healthy Skepticism, formerly the Medical Lobby for Appropriate Marketing, an organisation that aims to improve health by reducing harm from misleading drug promotion.

Dr Mansfield is speaking at the Australian Breastfeeding Association’s seminars, *Breastfeeding: Milk, Health and Love*, in Geelong on 1 March, and Adelaide on 2 March. For details go to [www.lrc.asn.au/2007/](http://www.lrc.asn.au/2007/)

To arrange an interview with Dr Peter Mansfield, or more information contact:

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