

Submission for changes to the Children's Code for Advertising Food

The current code recognises the need to extend a duty of care to protect children pursuant to the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child ("Convention"). Special notice is taken of

1. The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. The child's right to freedom of expression. This right shall include the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.
3. Appropriate guidelines for the protection of the child from information and material injurious to his or her well-being.

The code aims to provide the "appropriate guidelines" for food advertisements that influence children.

Recommendations:

Do not allow advertising of processed meats to children. Processed meats are classified as carcinogenic to humans by the world health organization (WHO (1) and therefore advertising these products to children directly contradicts points 1 and 3 above. The New Zealand (NZ) Cancer Society recommends people eat no or very little processed meat. (2)

Require advertising of any red meat product to state that meat should only be consumed 2-3 times a week. Red meat is classified as probably carcinogenic by the WHO (1), the WHO states "these findings further support current public health recommendations to limit intake of meat (1). Failing to require advertisers to state that consumption of red meat should be limited directly contradicts points 1 and 3 above. The NZ Cancer Society recommends people eat only small amounts of red meat. (2) The Netherlands Nutrition Centre recommends that people eat no more than two servings of meat a week. (3) Furthermore, animal agriculture is a significant contributor to climate change (4) which will present marked challenges for future humans inhabiting the planet, therefore promoting a reduction in use of the products of agriculture is in line with points 1 and 3.

Do not allow advertisers to state or imply that dairy is necessary for bone growth. A large analysis of 58 studies published on the relationship between milk, dairy products, calcium intake, and bone mineralization or fracture risk in children and young adults found no link between increased intake of dairy products or total dietary calcium and benefit for bone health. (5).

Do not allow advertisers to refer to a product or class of products by the name of a nutrient. The trend in advertising to promote word associations between products and the perceived healthy element in the product has been increasing over the past few years. This can be seen as the common reference to meat as 'protein' in popular forums (6). This trend has been actively pursued in advertising of dairy products implying to parents that they are necessary for child development, and previous complaints around this issue have been upheld (7). This trend confuses consumers

regarding healthy food choices and the nutritive content of their food and when aimed at children contradicts point 3 above by creating confusion about nutrition.

Require all advertisers of treat food, snacks, or fast food, to spend equivalent amounts of money promoting fresh fruit and vegetables. The WHO recommends increasing fruit and vegetable intake to help prevent noncommunicable disease (8). However only 40% of New Zealand young people meet the WHO's recommendations for vegetable intake and only 69% for fruit intake (9). Fruit and vegetables are rarely marketed to children and healthy eating promotions are usually drastically lacking in funds to compete with flashy advertising from food manufacturers. Requiring advertising of fruit and vegetables in direct competition with manufactured food is in line with all three points above. Additionally evidence suggests that dietary patterns established during childhood are predictive of patterns later in life (8), therefore increasing fruit and vegetable consumption in this age group has the potential to have significant positive long term health implications.

References

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