

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## Against Bottle-Feeding

To the Editor:

We were astounded when we saw the photo on the cover of the September 1998 *Journal*. According to the World Health Organization, breast-feeding should be the choice for our babies. The benefits of breast-feeding outweigh those of the bottle tenfold. We as health care providers should be emphasizing this promulgation at all times. The following are the 10 steps to promote breast-feeding developed by the World Health Organization:

1. Written policy related to breast-feeding is communicated to all health care staff.
2. All health care staff are to be trained in the skills necessary to implement the written breastfeeding policy.
3. All pregnant women are to be informed about the benefits and management of breast-feeding.
4. All mothers who plan to breast-feed will be assisted to do so within 30 minutes of birth.
5. Show mothers how to breast-feed and how to maintain lactation even if they are separated from their infants.
6. Give newborn infants no food or drink other than breast milk unless medically indicated.
7. Practice rooming in — allow mothers and infants to stay together 24 hours each day.
8. Encourage breast-feeding on demand.
9. Give no “artificial teats” or pacifiers to breast-feeding infants.
10. Foster the establishment of breast-feeding support groups and refer mothers to them on discharge from hospital.

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To the Editor:

I am very upset about the cover of the September 1998 issue of the *Journal*. Although I am all for pictures of mothers living their lives and pursuing their passions in the company of their babies, I have a hard time accepting that a scientific family medicine journal would publish a picture on its cover of a baby being bottle-fed formula, particularly while in a backpack.

The evidence favoring breast-feeding is overwhelming. Publishing this photo would seem to endorse bottle-feeding for convenience. Even for bottle-fed babies, though, feeding should be a social time. I always recommend that bottle-feeding parents interact with their infants during these times.

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**Publisher's Note:** We carefully select cover photographs on the basis of their representation of family life in this country. We regret any negative impressions that may have been created by our September 1998 cover. We appreciate all comments and make every attempt to consider them when making choices for the *Journal*.

## Complementary and Alternative Medicine

To the Editor:

I read with great interest the letters to the editor by Dr Hammerly and Dr Gillette (July 1998) and, with your

beneficence, would like to join the melee. I suppose my beliefs sit squarely between those of the 2 physicians. As a physician who not only tolerates, but (*mea culpa*) prescribes some herbal remedies, I believe our patients are best served by our having a foot in each camp. I have solid allopathic credentials (Medical College of Virginia, 1986), and I, too, am bothered by the outlandish claims made by charlatans trying to make a quick buck selling snake oil.

We need to be talking to our patients about this. There is a paucity of science about the effectiveness of herbal remedies, and the studies that have been done are pretty weak, but we can't blame that on the complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practitioners. As you watch your Pfizer stocks rise and say your Hail Viagras each night, just remember that there isn't much of a patron saint of herbal products. For better or worse, every fly-by-night organization and its fast-talking brother can bottle an herb, slap on a “dietary supplement” label (that should more accurately say “Stay away, FDA; you can't touch us”), and sell it. This doesn't give the legitimate herbal companies much incentive to dump several million dollars into research on echinacea.

I suspect we will have only limited information for quite a while yet. In the interim, there are some newsletters doing their best to evaluate and report the research that is out there. Heck, even that bastion of allopathic medicine, *The Medical Letter*, has started reporting on herbal medicines! Reading this stuff may help one of your patients, and it can certainly keep the lines of com-

The *Journal* welcomes letters to the editor. If found suitable, they will be published as space allows. Letters should be typed double spaced, should not exceed 400 words, and are subject to abridgment and other editorial changes in accordance with our style. All letters that reference a recently published *Journal* article are sent to the original authors for their reply. If no reply is published, the authors have not responded by date of publication. Send letters to Paul A. Nutting, MD, MSPH, Editor, The Journal of Family Practice, 1650 Pierce St, Denver, CO 80214. Telephone (303) 202-1543; Fax (303) 202-5136. E-mail: paul.nutting@aspn.amc.org

munication open.

My own interest in CAM is twofold: (1) There are a number of illnesses for which allopathic remedies are mediocre at best. We just don't have the right medicine or theory; and (2) Patients used to ask me questions I couldn't answer, like "Is it okay to take echinacea for a cold?" (By the way, my answer is that it's a whole lot better than amoxicillin.) There are answers to my patients' questions that seem better than those I learned in medical school (arnica for bruises, chamomile for colic, and echinacea for colds, for instance). Much as we used digitalis when it first came out because it was better than what we had — despite a lack of scientific evi-

dence — I believe we should use CAM, even without much scientific backing, in areas where allopathic medicine is subpar. I agree with William James, quoted by Dr Gillette:

"We have to live today by what truth we can get today and be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood."

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#### Corrections

An error in a figure appeared in an article published in the October issue (Adinoff AD, Schwartz HJ, Rickard KA, Yancey SW, Swearingen BE. Salmeterol compared with current therapies in chronic asthma. *J Fam Pract* 1998; 47:278-84). The lines identified as S + NW in Figure 2 should be labeled P + NW.

In an article in the November supplement to the *Journal* (Buse JB, Hrosikoski M. The case for a role for postprandial glucose monitoring in diabetes management. *J Fam Pract* 1998; 47(suppl):S29-S36) the footnote to Figure 1 should read, "Reproduced from Polonosky,<sup>2</sup> with permission."

## Opportunities to Participate in Research in Your Practice

### ASPEN Annual Meeting April 7-11, 1999

The Ambulatory Sentinel Practice Network (ASPEN) will hold its 15th Annual Convocation of Practices on April 7-11, 1999, at the Cheyenne Mountain Conference Center in Colorado Springs, Colorado. The event, which will offer approximately 18 hours of AAFP-prescribed continuing medical education credits, focuses on clinical research in primary care practices. A unique group of practicing family physicians and researchers will gather to discuss research ideas, current projects, and long-range goals. This meeting is rapidly becoming a crossroads for the emerging practice-based research networks from all around the country.

ASPEN studies span a broad spectrum of clinical and health services topics and provide important

new information for practicing physicians and health care policymakers. Recent research has focused on clinical topics such as acute otitis media, depression, and cognitive impairment, and health services issues such as referral and consultation and patterns of laboratory testing in primary care. Future studies to be considered at the annual meeting include improving outcomes for diabetes, hormone replacement therapy, the management of headaches and acute bronchitis, and integrating mental health services into the primary care office.

For more information on the Convocation of Practices and ASPEN, contact Lisa Schneck, Manager of Marketing and Public Relations, at 303-202-1540, ext. 224. ASPEN also maintains a Web site at [www.aspen.denver.co.us](http://www.aspen.denver.co.us).