

Abbott Ross

Evidence of violations of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent resolutions

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PRODUCTS INCLUDE—

Infant formula: *Similac, Similac Advance, Similac Advance Excel, Similac Lactose Free, Similac Advance with Iron Neosure, Isomil, Similac Alimentum, Similac Organic, Similac Gain, Similac Gain Advance Isomil EyeQ, Isomil 1*

Follow-on formula: *Similac Advance follow-on, Similac Excellence Follow-On, Isomil Follow-up, Isomil 2, Similac Gain Advance 2, Isomil 2 Advance*

LOGOS & ICONS—

The Abbott toy bear is a mascot with a name: Rosco, who appears in different poses with different coloured blankets to promote the various kinds of Similac.



Abbott-Ross produces pharmaceutical, nutritional and medical products, marketed in more than 130 countries. The name resulted from a merger in 1964, of Abbott Laboratories and Ross Products. Products marketed worldwide under the Abbott-Ross name include Similac, Isomil and Neosure. In the US and Canada, however, these brands are marketed by Ross Products. In 2006, sales of international paediatric nutritional products amounted to US\$899 million representing a 29 percent increase over the previous year. Sales increases were due primarily to volume growth in developing countries.

In November 2005, the US National Advertising Review Board (NARB) condemned an Abbott advertisement for Similac that claimed its nucleotide supplemented formula can “help support the development” of a baby’s immune system like breastmilk. In a small disclaimer, Abbott had denied its own claim by stating: “*The clinical study showed immune cell development. Whether this development provides immune protection like the breastfed infant has not been shown.*” (See picture bottom left).

NARB found that this statement was “confusing at best” and consequently ruled that Abbott should stop its advertising of Similac using those claims. NARB also ordered Abbott to change its advertising language. Abbott has since obeyed NARB’s ruling and discontinued the advertisement.

Abbott Nutrition International was created in 2006 to aggressively pursue existing and emerging growth opportunities around the world’s most rapidly growing economies. Abbott launched Similac Organic in the same year, widening its range of infant formula products further.

In September 2006, 300,000 bottles of Abbott’s flagship Similac range of liquid formula, were recalled in the US, Puerto Rico and Guam due to a bottle defect that breaks down the vitamin C content of the formula.

Abbott’s labelling practice in Israel was criticised in the press in November 2006 when it ignored the Israeli Health Ministry’s new safety guidelines on the use and storage of formula to prevent contamination. However, Abbott did not change its labelling language for its Similac infant formula on the basis that those instructions are not legally binding. Despite known public health risks, the company maintained it will not change its instructions on preparation and storage until and unless regulations are issued by the Israeli government.

In May 2007 in the US, Abbott recalled three lots of Similac Special Care Ready-To-Feed infant formulas for premature infants as they do not contain as much iron as indicated on the label.

In September 2007, Soroka, one of the largest hospitals in Israel stopped using Similac Special Care after observing a dramatic increase in necrotising enterocolitis in its premises.

Abbott is a member of the Pharmaceutical and Healthcare Association of the Philippines, which took the Filipino government to court to challenge the validity of national rules restricting the marketing practices of the baby food industry.

LOOK AT THIS!

VIOLATION

Similac[®] Advance[®] can help develop both your baby's immune system and brain like breast milk.

The clinical study showed immune cell development like breast milk. **Whether this development provides immune protection like breast milk has not been shown.** Breast milk also contains antibodies not found in infant formulas that are important for a baby's immune protection.

A claim denied by a disclaimer.