

Nutrition (NASPGHAN) practice guideline [2] has not stressed on screening for hypothyroidism among infants with constipation. However, in India, we must investigate all infants with chronic constipation for hypothyroidism as the neonatal screening program is not in practice. Regarding older children with refractory constipation, yes if a child has other features to suggest hypothyroidism then the child should be investigated for hypothyroidism. None of our cases among non-responders/difficult responders to medical therapy had hypothyroidism.

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Advertisement of “Complan”

A claim was made by a company (Heinz India Pvt Ltd.) regarding their product “Complan” in advertisement shown in media, according to which “Complan” increases the height of children. On company website it is mentioned “Give your child the power of Complan thrice a day and see him/her grow twice as fast” [1]. A reference is also given there supporting the claim. After going through this study [2] I found some issues that need to be critically analyzed to validate this claim.

1. In the study, it is clearly mentioned that subjects who were included in the study were “school children of 7-12 years of age in Coimbatore, India” [2]. But it seems that results are generalized to all age group children in advertisement. In conclusion section authors mentioned that “Encouraging findings from the present study demonstrate the beneficial effect of health drink on growth in children of 7-12 years” so it seems that authors were very clear about the specific population of the study and generalizability of results to specific population. But in the advertisement this fact was not shown and results were generalized to all children, which is methodological wrong and unethical.
2. In the “materials and methods” section it is mentioned that children who were recruited in this study were from “middle and low income

families”. In the results section it is mentioned that “more importantly, it revealed sub-optimal food intake pattern by children in all three groups”. Therefore results of this study can not be generalized to children of high socioeconomic class families and children whose food intake is optimal. But the advertisement is generalized to all children irrespective of their socioeconomic class and nutritional status.

3. There were 58 dropouts from the study and they were not included in the final analysis. Reasons for these dropouts were not mentioned in the study. Characteristics of these subjects were not compared to the subjects who remained in the study. Intention to treat principle was not followed. This may insert bias in the observed results. Ignoring the subjects who have withdrawn from study usually introduces bias in the favor of the intervention [3].
4. Randomization process is not explained in detail. In ‘materials and methods’ section it is mentioned that “schools were randomly assigned to two treatment groups”. This statement is not sufficient to understand the randomization process.
5. This study was an open label study. No blinding was done (or not reported in the study). In an unblinded study, there are all chances of bias in the favor of treatment. This issue becomes more important as the study is financially supported by the manufacturers (Heinz India Pvt Ltd). Though authors did not report conflict of interest or source of support in the published study. The

information regarding this source of support is taken from authors profile available on internet [4].

6. In the advertisement on company website it is mentioned that “Give your child the power of complan thrice a day and see him/her grow twice as fast”. In the study Complan was given twice a day and in the advertisement thrice a day is mentioned, which is not supported by this study [2].

After reading this study, two important ethical issues have emerged first; the claims made by company are exaggerated and second, results seem to be generalized to all children without any regard to the study results. Methodological and ethical issues related to the study are; not declaring conflict of interest and source of support by authors, unclear randomization, not following intention to treat principle, and blinding.

I believe there should be some regulation to advertisements especially related to food, nutrition,

drugs and cosmetics. Central or state government should form a committee of experts for analyzing these claims made by companies before they are shown in advertisements. Only high quality research should be allowed to be quoted by companies in these advertisements.

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Misleading Health Claims for Food Products Need to be Banned

I would like to submit my comments on an article titled ‘Advertisement of food products for children’ [1].

The industry producing food and nutrition supplements indulges sometimes in misleading the medical fraternity and public by giving exaggerated health claims in advertisements, product literature, and product labels. This is done to increase sales and make more profits.

Many countries have laws to regulate marketing and advertising of these products. In the United States, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have regulatory responsibility for dietary supplements. Under the Dietary Supplement Health

and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA), the dietary supplement manufacturer is responsible for ensuring that a dietary supplement is safe before it is marketed [2]. Also, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) of US regulates advertising of dietary supplements in national or regional newspapers and magazines; in radio and TV commercials, including infomercials; through direct mail to consumers; or on the Internet. The FTC requires that all information about supplements be truthful and not misleading. Before disseminating an advertisement, advertisers must have adequate substantiation for all objective product claims. Similarly in European Union, article 16 of the general food law says “Without prejudice to more specific provisions of food law, the labeling, advertising and presentation of food or feed, including their shape, appearance or packaging, the packaging materials used, the manner in which they are arranged and the setting in which they are displayed, and the information which is made available about them through whatever medium, shall not mislead consumers.” [3]. In India, the Food