

Prakled

Report on meeting regarding IMS Act and appropriate feeding practices**Date: 6th November 2002**

Half a day regional seminar on IMS(Infant Milk Substitutes) Act and appropriate feeding practices was held at Urban health research and training center on 6th November between 9.30 am to 2.30 pm. Programme was inaugurated by Justice N.Venkatachala, Director , Lokayukta. He in his inaugural speech stressed importance on part of advocates, doctors and other professionals to know more clearly about this act. Unfortunately many advocates themselves do not know that there is such an act. He also called upon advocates and doctors to spread the knowledge among common citizens about this act. Dr. Poornima, editor, Udaya Vani called upon people to adapt local practices, as they are found to be very appropriate for local culture. But, unfortunately globalization has entered with profit motivation even to the most natural maternal act of breastfeeding. It is high time that the entire pro people organizations, individuals to act against this problem.

After the inaugural session, technical session began with presentation on IMS act by Dr. Joga Rao, Director, Pegasus Health Law consultants. He explained about the law that is in force from August 1993. This act prohibits any type of promotion, distribution and unethical marketing of infant milk substitutes (Lactogen etc) and prohibits unethical market practices and promotion of baby foods (Cerelac, Farex etc). He also mentioned that like in any other products, salaries of sales staff should not depend on their sales. However creating mass awareness about this act including professionals is the need of the hour. Absolute lack of information about this act, both among professionals and common citizens, doctors being lured by industry, career oriented women, etc have led to situation where industry is taking people for a ride. Therefore appropriate action on all these areas is very important to overcome this problem.

Later in the second session, Dr. Asha Benakappa, secretary BPNI called upon Doctors to be ethical when they prescribe foods to infants. She lamented that professional doctors are least interested in the issue of breastfeeding. This is because they feel they know every thing about the breastfeeding. Companies are trying to sell infant milk substitutes under the garb of infant foods. Medical representatives force doctors to prescribe by convincing, confusing or corrupting them for their sales promotion.

After this presentation , panel discussion was arranged to discuss on appropriate action. Panelists included Ms. Hemalatha Mahishi (noted development oriented advocate), Dr. R. Poornima (Chief Sub editor, Udaya Vani and noted development journalist) with few other members.

Few salient action points emerged out of the discussion are:

1. Immediate need is to create awareness to as many people as possible about this act.
2. Details about any erring professionals (Doctors, Medical representatives should be immediately intimated to BPNI-Bangalore branch).
3. Media should publish about this act as much as possible so as to create adequate knowledge and awareness among common citizens.

AP/HRM

Do we have a copy of the complete IMS Act
if not we should get a copy, along with
commentaries / other reports
check if we have a resource file on this - if not, one may be
started
In
19/11
maly
21/11