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AND dismisses report alleging junk food corporate sponsors exert 'vice grip' over FNCE



By Elaine Watson+
19-Nov-2013

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AND: More than 6,000 people attended FNCE; it's to be expected that not all of them agree with every part of the four-day event

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The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (AND) has rejected claims in a new report that corporate sponsors such as PepsiCo and Coca-Cola exert such a "vice grip" over its annual Food and Nutrition Conference & Expo (FNCE) that its integrity could be compromised.

AND media relations manager Ryan O'Malley was speaking to FoodNavigator-USA after advocacy group Dietitians for Professional Integrity (DFPI) released a report ([click here](#)) outlining its concerns about the influence of 'Big Food' on FNCE 2013, which took place in Houston, Texas, last month.

DFPI: Education materials mislead by

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Dietitians for Professional Integrity: Our hope is that, with time, AND will realize partnerships with big corporate sponsors send



omission

DFPI co-founder Andy Bellatti took particular issue with some of the sponsors' educational materials, such as a Kellogg's booklet for school administrators promoting multigrain Frosted Flakes, Cheez-Its, and Pop Tarts as examples of 'good nutrition and simple grains'.

Similarly, a PepsiCo chart comparing sodium levels in commonly consumed snack foods "makes Frito-Lay's chip offerings seem like the best snack choices" as they are compared with "large muffins, beef jerky, pretzels, bagels, and cheese", said DFPI, claiming that PepsiCo "conveniently" failed to include other commonly consumed snacks such as fruit, nuts and seeds that are far lower in sodium than its chips.

DFPI also took issue with the "misguided" ban on photography on the FNCE expo floor which it claimed "fostered mistrust and suspicion".

out the wrong message

SPECIAL FEATURE: Should AND sever its ties with 'junk food' corporate sponsors?

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AND: More than 6,000 people attended FNCE; it's to be expected that not all of them agree with every part of the four-day event

But Bellatti had not made any substantive allegations, and supplied no hard evidence that sponsors had exerted a 'vice grip' over FNCE, said O'Malley at AND.

"With more than 360 exhibitors, 250 educational sessions, 400 speakers and a program book that exceeds 220 pages, Andy has found a handful of things he dislikes. More than 6,000 people attended FNCE this year, so it's to be expected that not all of them agree with every part of the four-day event."



As for the photo ban, AND has asked exhibitors and attendees to refrain from taking pictures on the expo floor "for many years", he claimed.

"It only recently became necessary to more strongly enforce this request when photos of exhibitors and attendees were taken and used without the subject's permission. We will, however, continue to evaluate the photography policy."

With regard to DFPI's [petition on change.org calling for AND to sever ties with corporate sponsors](#) (which has garnered 25,000+signatures), he said: "To best evaluate the petition's signatures, we cross-referenced the signatures against the Academy membership database.

"Only 600 signatures matched with current Academy membership, representing less than 1% of our membership. The Academy will, however, continue its work to advocate on behalf of all of our more than 75,000 members."

The RDs are selectively describing the food supply to show its worst side, and industry does exactly the same in reverse

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So what do other FNCE delegates and RDs think about AND's ties with corporate sponsors such as McDonald's and PepsiCo?

One RD who asked not to be named told FoodNavigator-USA that the dietetic community had become *"excessively overwrought about funding sources"* given that *"someone needs to pay for the special promotion of nutrition issues to the public"*.

But she added: *"I can't say that either side is pure of intent..."*

"I see the dietetic community acting in a way that not consistent with the science, and industry certainly cherry picks what it promotes to the nutrition community. The RDs are selectively describing the food supply to show its worst side, and industry does exactly the same in reverse."

"AND should not succumb to the selective cries to denounce industry ties, but we need to hold the industry sponsors accountable to tell full and truthful messages to the nutrition spokespeople and beyond."

Dr Marion Nestle: Sponsorship perverts science

However, Dr Marion Nestle, Paulette Goddard professor of nutrition, food studies, and public health at New York University, said it was wishful thinking to assume that companies that make their money selling soda and chips as well as water, juice and oatmeal could provide a *"full"* picture.

The issue, she said, was not whether FNCE delegates were capable of distinguishing facts from sponsored spin in conference handouts.

She told us: *"That's not the right question. Most people are unaware of how such things influence their opinions. Substantial research on sponsorship by tobacco, drug, and chemical companies provides such evidence. There is not yet as much research on the effects of food industry sponsorship but the few studies that exist are completely consistent with research on other industries."*

It's stunningly easy to design studies that accomplish these goals

Asked whether it was unfair to automatically dismiss industry-funded research and information rather than judging it on its merits, Nestle said: *"In my opinion, agriculture, food, nutrition, and health professionals should dismiss industry-sponsored research out of hand, and journals should not accept industry-sponsored papers."*

"There is only one reason for food companies to sponsor research—so they can use the results in their own interests."



Dr Marion Nestle: Sponsored research is not about seeking truth or adding to public knowledge. It is about obtaining evidence to defend or sell the sponsor's product, to undermine research that might suggest that a product is unhealthy, to head off regulation, and to allow the product to be marketed with health claims

"Sponsorship perverts science. Sponsored research is not about seeking truth or adding to public knowledge. It is about obtaining evidence to defend or sell the sponsor's product, to undermine research that might suggest that a product is unhealthy, to head off regulation, and to allow the product to be marketed with health claims."

"It's stunningly easy to design studies that accomplish these goals and to conduct them in ways that meet the scientific criteria of peer-reviewers."

She added: *"Peer reviewers, journal editors, and readers ought to be asking: Why did the sponsor fund this study? Was the research question designed to permit an answer that might not*

meet the sponsor's goal? Was the study conducted in a way that permitted an answer against the sponsor's interest? Sponsored studies almost always fail these tests of independence."

Dr Jim Painter: The fact it, companies have money [for this kind of research] and the federal government does not

However, Jim Painter, RD, PhD (Professor at the School of Family and Consumer Sciences at Eastern Illinois University) who spoke at FNCE this year ([click here](#)) and serves as a consultant

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Dr Jim Painter: "On the one hand, I see companies that have been very active in creating the obesity epidemic like Pepsi and Coke say they are now helping to cure it and I wonder if AND should be working with them, especially when you look at what their main products are. But on the other hand, if PepsiCo changes its cooking oil, it's changing the oil makeup of America."

for the California Raisin Marketing Board, said this was not realistic.

"The fact is, companies have money [for this kind of research] and the federal government does not."

So transparency is critical, he added. *"You have to declare any potential conflicts of interest. For me personally, I am also very careful about what I work with [when it comes to industry sponsorship], things like raisins, whole foods and nuts - something I'll give my heart and soul for."*

If PepsiCo changes its cooking oil, it's changing the oil makeup of America

The issue of whether big food companies can be part of a problem (obesity) they have helped to create is a question that always rears its head at FNCE, he added.



While the American diet would undoubtedly be improved if shoppers only bought whole foods and prepared everything from scratch, reformulating packaged products consumed by millions of people may prove a more realistic/effective strategy, he said.

"It's pie in the sky to think we'll all going to buy wholefoods. The world eats at McDonald's so if it offers more healthy choices it can be a part of the solution."

"On the one hand, I see companies that have been very active in creating the obesity epidemic like Pepsi and Coke say they are now helping to cure it and I wonder if AND should be working with them, especially when you look at what their main products are."

"But on the other hand, if PepsiCo changes its cooking oil, it's changing the oil makeup of America."

He added: *"Are there some companies that AND/FNCE probably shouldn't be working with? Yes, probably, but where do you draw the line?"*

[Click here](#) to download the DFPI report.

Click [here](#) and [here](#) to read about the criteria underpinning AND's corporate sponsorship program.

Read our special feature on this issue: **SPECIAL FEATURE: Should AND sever its ties with 'junk food' corporate sponsors?**

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Say what?

My Good Food Friends –

You just can't make this up. Marion doesn't think that her own kind is smart enough to distinguish between facts and spin? She's worried that her Dietitians/Nutritionists wouldn't know that Frosted Flakes® aren't quit as 'healthy' as a carrot. Well, if that's true, then the next time one of her ilk 'tells' us what to eat, should we listen?

THEN Marion says, "In my opinion, agriculture, food, nutrition, and health professionals should dismiss industry-sponsored research out of hand, and journals should not accept industry-sponsored papers." Perhaps she should review the 'work' of her much heralded, independent research, much of which she has probably based a few of her 'lectures' on:

40 years of federal nutrition research flawed?
Study claims methods faulty

Oct. 23, 2013 Shara Rutberg | Functional Ingredients

Oops.

Forty years of government-funded nutrition research may be invalid because the data collection method was critically flawed, according to a new study by the Arnold School of Public Health at the University of South Carolina.

The study findings, published in PLOS (The Public Library of Science) ONE , suggest that a majority of the nutrition data collected by the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES), funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), are not "physiologically credible," said Arnold School scientist Edward Archer, who conducted the research, in a university release.

Their analysis suggests that without valid population-level data, speculations regarding the role of energy intake in the rise in the prevalence of obesity are without empirical support, said Archer.

Conducted by the CDC and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the NHANES is the motherlode of data on the health of Americans. It combines interviews of self-reported food and beverage consumptions over 24 hours and physical examinations to assess the health and nutritional status of the U.S. population. It's the primary source of data used by researchers studying the impact of nutrition and diet on health.

If invalid, it may question the validity of scores of research based on the NHANES, like a study last year that found that blood levels of trans-fatty acids in white adults in the U.S. population decreased by 58 percent from 2000 to 2009.

The new examination of the NHANES examined data from 28,993 men and 34,369 women, 20 to 74 years old, from NHANES I (1971 – 1974) through NHANES (2009 – 2010), and looked at the caloric intake of the participants and their energy expenditure, predicted by height, weight, age and sex. The results show that – based on the self-reported recall of food and beverages – the vast majority of the NHANES data "are physiologically implausible, and therefore invalid," Archer said. Basically, the "calories in" reported by participants and the "calories out," don't add up and it would be impossible to survive on most of the reported energy intakes. This misreporting of energy intake varied among participants, and was greatest in obese men and women who underreported their intake by an average 25 percent and 41 percent – they were off by about 716 and 856 calories a day. Yes, math has never been among Americans' strong points.

"Throughout its history, the NHANES survey has failed to provide accurate estimates of the habitual caloric consumption of the U.S. population," Archer said. These limitations "suggest that the ability to estimate population trends in caloric intake and generate public policy relevant to diet-health relationships is extremely limited," said Archer.

Unfortunately, public policy cannot be based on the widening of airline seats, the growth of the XXX Large section at box stores and the popularity of creations like Wendy's Baconator (two beef patties layered with bacon and cheese).

"The nation's major surveillance tool for studying the relationships between nutrition and health is not valid," said Archer. "It is time to stop spending tens of millions of health research dollars collecting invalid data and find more accurate measures," he said.

http://newhope360.com/breaking-news/40-years-federal-nutrition-research-flawed?cid=nl_360_daily&&sfvc4news=42&cl=article_3

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Posted by **Dennis L. Weaver**
21 November 2013 | 04h19

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