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[CSPI U.S.] [Newsroom]

Pediatric Dentists Accused of Selling Out to Coke

CSPI Urges AAPD to Put Kids' Teeth Ahead of Coke's Money

The American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) should abandon a \$1-million partnership with the world's largest soft drink company, Coca-Cola, according to the nonprofit Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). CSPI charged that by partnering with Coke, the AAPD is burnishing the reputation of a company whose products cause tooth decay, obesity, and other health problems in children, and is jeopardizing its own reputation.

"Many dentists and health advocates, as well as the general public, will be outraged by the AAPD's involvement with Coca-Cola and will charge, accurately, that the AAPD has made a deal with the devil," wrote CSPI executive director Michael F. Jacobson to the AAPD's leadership.

According to a press release issued yesterday by AAPD, the grant from Coca-Cola will "support important clinical, basic and behavioral research" and "create public and professional educational programs, based on science, that promote improved dental health for children." Regardless of what the money is used for, says CSPI, the grant will make the AAPD a captive of Coca-Cola, making it extremely unlikely that the AAPD will take positions antagonistic to the company, like opposing soft-drink machines in schools, or supporting labeling of the added-sugar content of foods.

"It's hard to imagine a professional association of dentists choosing a more inappropriate partner to fund educational programs," Jacobson said. "The AAPD would have to be incredibly naive to believe that Coke's gift is inspired by a newfound desire to promote dental health. Coke's idea of education is spending billions 'educating' kids to consume caffeine- and sugar-laden soda. I'm surprised that AAPD is willing to be co-opted in this way, and for relatively little money in the scheme of things. The Academy's leadership should resign."