Reviewer's report

Title: Modification of stool's water content in constipated infants: management by an adapted infant formula

Version: 2 Date: 20 September 2010

Reviewer: Oscar Brunser

Reviewer's report:

This study has one main omission that invalidates it: apparently the authors never measured the daily water intake (I am not referring to that in the formula). Every pediatrician knows that when parents consult because their infant evacuates hard stools, the first thing he/she has to do is to increase drastically the baby’s water intake.

Another point is that the authors do not state the season during which the study was carried out: there is more constipation during the warm months because of increased losses of water through the lungs and skin. A third point is that there are no control groups (breastfed and fed another “initiation” formula).

This reviewer has some additional doubts: a) was the water content of the stools effectively measured before and after administration of the formula? b) Was the calcium content of the feces measured at both stages of the study to evaluate whether there was an increase of calcium palmitate? c) the amount of magnesium in the formula tested is not increased; this concentration is comparable to that found in some liquid formulations for prematures, in whom one does not want anything resembling loose stools.

I would advise the authors to be more careful with some of the expressions used in this manuscript. Many young infants cry and strain while defecating while expelling rather soft stools; furthermore, they flex their body and limbs to exert a maximal effort while pushing: this reminds of the monkeys who have suffered transection of the CNS at the level of the mesencephalon, or individuals with extensive lesions of the brain cortex or who are tetaplegic due to spinal chord section who also experience massive muscular contractions when defecating automatically.

The authors should be assisted by somebody with an adequate knowledge of the English language. Stools may be hard but they do not have “stone-like consistency”. With respect to reference 2 the authors should clarify what the mean by “28 % of the total number of infants with functional disorders”: which disorders?

Level of interest: Reject as not of sufficient priority to merit publishing in this journal
Quality of written English: Needs some language corrections before being published

Statistical review: Yes, but I do not feel adequately qualified to assess the statistics.

Declaration of competing interests:

In the past five years I received reimbursements, fees, funding, or salary from an organisation that may in any way gain or lose financially from the publication of this manuscript, either now or in the future