



ACADEMIA  
ESPAÑOLA DE  
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Y DIETÉTICA

**The Spanish Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics is not financed by industry and it's free from conflict economic interest.**

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We have read the article titled “Research partnerships between Coca-Cola and health organizations in Spain” published recently in the European Journal of Public Health (<https://doi.org/10.1093/eurpub/cky175>).

We are writing as in our capacity as the current trustee of the Spanish Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics (the Academy), mentioned in the attached Table1 as the entity that received the amount of €242,600.

The present day Academy is the succession of the Spanish Dieticians & Nutritionists Association, which in 2013 (for legal purposes), gave rise to two entities: the General Board of the Dietitians/Nutritionists in Spain and the Spanish Dieticians-Nutritionists Foundation (FEDN). Even though the General Board cleared itself on the said date of any conflict of economic interest related to the industry, the FEDN continued to collaborate with the industry just like its predecessor Association had done, following a strict collaboration protocol published on its website<sup>1</sup>, as a result of which the management board and advisory committee members blindly voted the collaborations with the industry, i.e.; without knowing the economic compensation involved. In this sense, the sum received from the Coca-Cola in Spain between 2010 and 2016 was €173,070, under concept: (1) Conferences: organisation, stand and presentations (€105,570); (2) Aquabona brand (Coca-Cola's brand) on website and water at the events of the institution (€67,500).

<b>Activities and events of the Spanish Dieticians &amp; Nutritionists Association (AEDN)/the Spanish Dieticians-Nutritionists Foundation (FEDN).</b>	<b>Amount in Euros</b>	<b>Year</b>
II AEDN Forum and I Annual Meeting of Dieticians & Nutritionists. Toledo. (Conference, symposium, presentation)	5000	2011
V AEDN Conference. Valladolid. (Conference, symposium, presentation)	14500	2011
Yearly payment by the Aquabona brand for the website y official water of the AEDN.	7500	2012
Attendance and participation of the FEDN at the 16th International Congress of Dietetics. Sydney. (Conference, symposium, presentation)	22000	2012
Yearly payment by the Aquabona brand for the website y official water of the AEDN.	15000	2013
Yearly payment by the Aquabona brand for the website y official water of the AEDN.	15000	2014
VI FEDN Conference. Valencia. (Conference, symposium, presentation)	14450	2014
Attendance and participation of the FEDN at the VI Latin American Nutrition Conference. Montevideo. (Conference, symposium, presentation)	8120	2015
I National Meeting of Dieticians-Nutritionists in Dietetics Consultancy. Barcelona. (Conference, symposium, presentation)	4000	2015
Aquabona brand website of the FEDN and official water of the AEDN.	15000	2015
XVII International Congress of Dietetics “ICD Granada 2016”	37500	2016
Aquabona brand website of the FEDN and official water of the AEDN	15000	2016
Total	173070	

Towards the end of 2016, the FEDN was transformed into the current day Spanish Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics, and during this stage, the current Trustee decided to renounce financing from the food and pharmaceutical industry, thereby freeing itself from any conflicts of interest to carry out its activities beyond all reasonable doubt.

In March 2017, and with a view to greater transparency, the Academy publicly announced that it will not renew all contracts signed with the food industry that involved receipt of money<sup>2</sup> and published a protocol for total transparency in the health policy of the Academy, along with some established internal

norms to prevent the industry from manipulating the agenda and activities of the entity, including training<sup>3</sup>.

The Academy "provisionally" approved that the only activity permitted for interaction with the industry for promoting dialogue with professionals would be at conferences (norm 14). In order to maintain its condition as an "entity free from conflicts of economic interest" it agreed at a meeting held by attendees at the conference that revenues from contributions made by the food and pharmaceutical industry at the conference would be donated to cultural, social, research and humanitarian entities. It also prohibited the participation of the industry in the scientific program with economic contribution and opened the possibility for presenting scientific papers which would be "blindly" reviewed by the scientific committee, thus affording the same treatment as in the case of the remaining abstracts presented by nutrition professionals. All papers that passed the blind appraisal of the scientific committee would be grouped together into a sole session which would be clearly identified as "Dialogs with the food industry" to thus give attendees the opportunity to decide on participation. All these norms were compiled and published in a second document entitled "Reference Document for Organising the Academy's Conferences"<sup>4</sup>.

The Trustee of the Spanish Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics has decided to write this comment in response to the article since there happens to be a documentation error in the attached Table 1, information that should have been contrasted by the authors of the said article.

The Trustee of the Spanish Academy of Nutrition & Dietetics would like to manifest that the data published in the article have been facilitated by the Coca-Cola in Spain in an act of transparency, something which the Academy requires from the entire food and pharmaceutical industry.

The problem involving the supposed influencing by the food and pharmaceutical industry on the decisions made by scientists or scientific bodies is way beyond the contributions made by just one company and is an issue of great importance that must be dealt with thoroughly, without forgetting that:

1. There are many companies that make economic contributions and these have not been published in an act of transparency.
2. It should be the scientific bodies/foundations, associations/professional associations, etc, especially scientists and nutrition professionals, that declare any direct or indirect conflicts of economic interests connected with the food industry (including food distribution companies).

Relationships with the food/pharmaceutical industry can exist, it is something licit and does not need to be negative or damaging, however, the principles of independence, transparency and proportionality should be preserved in all health organisations and scientific entities, and hence the problem arises when such conflicts are not declared, i.e., when donations received and their use are not publicly announced. This responsibility lies with both parties.

The Academy calls all scientific societies/associations/foundations/professional associations, etc from the health field to:

1. Begin a path towards reconversion to bodies that are free from conflicts of economic interest or that they make public any conflict of interest that their organisations and board members have.

2. Implement protocols for total transparency, integrity and equality in health policies and relationship with third parties.
3. Avoid participating in marketing and communication campaigns directed to the population in exchange for funding.
4. Withdraw any scientific support provided to food and drink brands.

Lastly, the Trustee of the Academy is at the disposal of the editors and authors for any clarification or information that they may need in order to rectify or withdraw the article and provide explanations.

#### Reference

- 1 <http://fedn.es/docs/guiafedn.pdf>
- 2 <http://www.academianutricionydietetica.org/noticia.php?id=16>
- 3 <http://www.academianutricionydietetica.org/archivos/AENDPosturayDeclaracion.pdf>
- 4 <http://www.academianutricionydietetica.org/archivos/AENDcongresos.pdf>