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**Toll From Tainted Chinese Formula Climbs to 53,000; Producer Received Complaints in 2007**

*New Rochelle, NY, September 25, 2008* – The number of infants in China who have fallen ill as a result of formula tainted by melamine, has reached 53,000 and is responsible for the deaths of at least three infants. (*New York Times*, September 24, 2008)

A report released by the Xinhua News Agency indicates the Sanlu Group, the producer of the tainted formula, had received consumer complaints about their product as early as December 2007, and repeatedly made efforts to hide information about possible contamination. Melamine, a chemical compound used mainly as a fire retardant, has been identified as the contaminant in the formula which has now led to the recall of Chinese-made dairy products in China and other parts of Asia as well.

In response to these continuing reports of tainted Chinese baby formula, the *Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine* ([www.bfmed.org](http://www.bfmed.org)) urges public agencies worldwide to renew education and support for breastfeeding. The tragic and unnecessary deaths of infants in China, and the sickening of thousands of others, remind us of a truth health experts have long understood: with extremely rare exceptions, breastmilk is unquestionably the safest method of infant feeding. Much attention has been focused lately on ways in which food and other supply chains in China should be more carefully monitored and regulated, a problem which has proven to be ubiquitous, deeply engrained in the Chinese economy, and thus far highly unmanageable.

In the case of infant feeding, however, very little has been said about what would appear to be the most effective long-term strategy to protect infants against future feeding catastrophes, namely, the promotion of breastfeeding. The melamine scandal, together with the terribly catastrophic earthquake that ravaged so many Chinese communities last May, should have demonstrated to China and to the entire world that breastfeeding is a practice that all societies should cherish, safeguard, and promote. This stark reminder of the potential dangers of artificial milk, underscores the importance of promoting, protecting, and supporting breastfeeding worldwide.

Dr. Caroline Chantry, President of the *Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine*, pointed out “China is not the first, or only country to fall prey to contaminated baby formula. But we must make it the last. And we do know how.”

According to the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), a recent decline in funding world-wide for public education and training of health professionals to support breastfeeding, has resulted in a decline of hospitals implementing the WHO/UNICEF Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative. The Initiative incorporates ten steps for successful breastfeeding, and forbids the unethical promotion of breastmilk substitutes in health facilities. And the *Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine* continues to promote professional education through its conferences, publications, and its peer-reviewed journal *Breastfeeding Medicine* ([www.liebertpub.com/bfm](http://www.liebertpub.com/bfm)).

The **Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine** is a worldwide organization of physicians dedicated to the promotion, protection and support of breastfeeding and human lactation through education, research, and advocacy. An independent, self-sustaining, international physician organization and the only organization of its kind, ABM's mission is to unite members of various medical specialties through physician education, expansion of knowledge in breastfeeding science and

human lactation, facilitation of optimal breastfeeding practices, and encouragement of the exchange of information among organizations.

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