

Editorial

The American Society for Clinical Research

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has recently been successful in forcing Ragu Foods Inc, and even the industrial giant Procter and Gamble, to remove the word "fresh" from the name of food products that are not, in fact, fresh. David A. Kessler, the new head of the FDA, is to be congratulated for his forceful, consumer-oriented action in making sure that "food labels accurately and fairly reflect what's in the product." So forgive me, for although I recently wrote an editorial about misrepresentation in dental advertising (January 1991), I find myself once again drawn to comment on another example of seemingly inaccurate labeling by a dental products company.

The other day an advertising brochure came across my desk from the "American Society for Clinical Research" (ASCR). Since I am very interested in clinical research, I opened the flyer. What I saw was not a list of respected clinical researchers participating in an academic educational program, but a list of speakers who seem to be employed by, or allied to, the Den-Mat Corporation. Included on the list of speakers is Dr Robert Ibsen, the president of Den-Mat Corporation—the same Dr Ibsen who expressed his concern about my previous editorial on misrepresentation in a letter to the editor published in *Quintessence International* last month. But nowhere to be seen on the brochure is the corporate name.

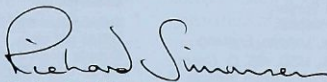
The only clues that Den-Mat may be connected to the lectures are the bulk-rate mailing permit for the brochure, which was issued in Santa Maria, California, the home base for Den-Mat, and the maildrop post office box address for the ASCR, which is in the next zip code area (93457) to Den-Mat Corporation (93456). And, oh yes, a dead giveaway was the listed telephone numbers. Although the brochure contained a registration form, three telephone numbers were also listed. I called the numbers for more information. All numbers listed for the ASCR are to the Den-Mat Corporation. I asked one operator if the American Society for Clinical Re-

search is a society one can join. The person paused, obviously taken somewhat aback, then, puzzled, said "I am not sure." I asked who the president of ASCR is. The answer I received was "Dr Ibsen."

Thus a legitimate-sounding organization, the American Society for Clinical Research, is apparently being used as a front organization for Den-Mat Corporation. The ASCR, without disclosing its commercial connection, draws in participants under the guise of education and research. But is the truth not that Den-Mat wants to sell you their products at these programs or at subsequent follow-up contacts? This sounds to me like the ways of the famous "bait and switch" confidence trick.

It appears as if the name of clinical research is being sullied by a dental products manufacturer using the name of an official-sounding organization as a phony front for financial fulfillment. If this is true, it will lead to a further erosion of the professional and public trust usually associated with professional organizations. If the courses are run by Den-Mat Corporation, then why not say so on the brochure?

I welcome Dr Ibsen's response to these concerns. If, in fact, the American Society for Clinical Research is an independent, bona fide research organization I will gladly apologize to him for thinking otherwise. If the ASCR is simply a creation of Den-Mat Corporation for cheap credibility, Dr Ibsen could do the profession a favor by dissolving the society as quickly as it was created.



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Editor-in-Chief

Editor's note: Dr Ibsen was provided with an advance courtesy copy of this editorial. He indicated that he will respond in next month's issue.