

Brockner Ryan, Beth

From: Etzel, Ruth [Ruth.Etzel@usda.gov]
Sent: Friday, July 02, 1999 10:36 AM
To: 'Hall, Lauri'; 'Koteras, Ray'; 'Hurley, Hope'
Cc: 'Suchyta, Roger'
Subject: message from Ruth Etzel, M.D.

The Committee on Environmental Health and the Committee on Infectious Diseases may want to look at the way Johnson and Johnson handled the poisoned Tylenol affair in 1982. It followed the three basic rules:

- > (1) act quickly to recall the affected product
- > (2) be open with consumers about what went wrong
- > (3) show contrition
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- > Seventeen years ago, when an extortionist tried to wring money out of
- > Johnson & Johnson by lacing capsules of Tylenol with cyanide, 7 people
- > died. While the government was still considering what to do (sound
- > familiar?), and before the media had time to put the company on the
- > defensive, Johnson & Johnson recalled all Tylenol products. That cost
- > about \$100-million and it lost short term sales. But it emerged from the
- > episode with consumer confidence at a higher level than ever, and quickly
- > regained its leadership of the painkiller market.
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- > The AAP should be dedicated to promptly providing truthful information
- > about this situation to pediatricians. We must follow the three basic
- > rules:
- > (1) Act quickly to inform pediatricians that the products have more
- > mercury than we realized
- > (2) Be open with consumers about why we didn't catch this earlier
- > (3) Show contrition
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- > As you know, the Public Health Service informed us yesterday that they
- > were planning to conduct business as usual, and would probably indicate no
- > preference for either product. While the Public Health Service may think
- > that their "product" is immunizations, I think their "product" is their
- > recommendations. If the public loses faith in the PHS recommendations,
- > then the immunization battle will falter. To keep faith, we must be open
- > and honest now and move forward quickly to replace these products. Short
- > term shortages may occur.
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- > AAP should assure pediatricians that we are committed to making sure that
- > all children will be vaccinated, although some may be delayed due to
- > shortages. This is what American parents want to hear from their
- > pediatricians. Anything less may cause them to lose faith in our
- > recommendations.
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