Mr. Robert Iger  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
The Walt Disney Company  
500 South Buena Vista Street  
Burbank, CA 91521  

Via facsimile: 818-560-5960

Dear Mr. Iger:

Thank you for your letter of August 13. I have reviewed the news release about the paper published by three of our faculty in the Journal of Pediatrics entitled, "Associations between Media Viewing and Language Development in Children Under Age 2 Years." In addition, I have conferred with one of the paper’s co-authors.

The Journal of Pediatrics is a prestigious, peer-reviewed journal. Papers submitted to this journal undergo a rigorous review by experts in the field before they are accepted for publication. This process ensures that the work represented in the paper meets the high standards of scientific inquiry required by the editors of the journal and its editorial panel of distinguished scientists. The University of Washington stands behind the work of Professors Frederick Zimmerman, Dimitri Christakis, and Andrew Meltzoff.

The paper set out to “test the association [italics added] of media exposure with language development in children under age 2 years.” It did not purport to establish a causal relationship, as the authors explicitly state in the article. The authors found a large and statistically significant reduction in vocabulary among infants age 8 to 16 months who viewed baby DVDs or videos, compared to those who did not view them. They also concluded that more research is needed to determine the reasons for this statistical association.

The authors of the study and I believe the news release reflects the essential points made in the research publication. The news release clearly is not intended to substitute for a reading of the research paper, which was made available to all the reporters who contacted our news office. The news release briefly summarizes the methodology of the study and includes the researchers’ interpretations of the findings, something in which most news media are interested and one of the reasons for issuing the release. The researchers find no inconsistencies between the content of the news release and their paper. They believe the release accurately reflects the paper’s conclusions and their commentary. For these reasons, the University of Washington will not retract its news release.
We do not view this study as the last word on the subject of the influence baby DVDs have on child development. The findings were considered significant enough to be reported in a major journal, and as a public institution we feel duty-bound to make the public aware of these findings. As we say in the release, "more research is required, particularly to examine the long-term effects of baby DVDs and videos on children's cognitive development." We believe that our researchers at the University of Washington will continue to be in the forefront of this important research aimed at helping parents and society enhance the lives of children.

Sincerely yours,

Mark A. Emmert
President