EC Animal Studies: Stress Confounds Results

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PERFORM-A is a washout. The eight-year, $10 million industry research project that was supposed to answer the question, "Does cellphone radiation cause cancer in animals?" instead promises to sow more confusion and mistrust.

The project consists of six long-term experiments, carried out on mice and rats in four European laboratories. Most everyone connected to PERFORM-A—from the researchers who did the work to the cell phone industry that sponsored it—says that it sounds an all-clear: Cell phones are cancer-safe.

In fact, the studies tell us practically nothing. They are impossible to interpret because of a flaw common to all six experiments. The animals were restrained in a fixed position during the radiation exposures and that restraint had a profound impact. There is now no way to disentangle the effect of the exposure system from that of the radiation.

That an exposure system can confound an experiment is nothing new. What is surprising is that the managers of the PERFORM-A project disregarded numerous warning signs. Their own preliminary studies pointed to the fact that animals suffered from restraint stress, as could have been predicted from reading the easily accessible scientific literature. And when confronted with the final results of their six experiments, which showed that something had gone terribly wrong, the project team simply looked the other way.

What follows is a story that illustrates what happens when engineering takes precedence over biology and when inconvenient scientific findings are ignored. But most of all, it shows the perils posed by industry-sponsored research where those in charge are pushing for the desired results.

Read the complete story, "Wheel on Trial".

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Details on the 19 animal studies on cell phone radiation, 1997-2007, are available here.

PERFORM-A, RF animal studies, EC, Niels Kuster, Motorola, Q. Balzano,

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