Japanese Discount Brain Tumor Risk

Sixfold Increase in Gliomas Seen as Unreliable

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If anyone is still not convinced that the completed Interphone study should be released as soon as possible (see our January 30 post), they need look no further than how the Interphone results from Japan were handled last week.

A team led by Naohito Yamaguchi, Toru Takebayashi and Masao Taki reported that there was no increased risk of brain tumors among regular users of mobile phones in Japan. Well, actually, that's not quite true. They found that the odds of developing one type of brain tumor (a glioma) was close to six times higher among especially heavily-exposed users, but they decided that this result was unreliable. Their paper will be published by the *British Journal of Cancer* and was posted on its Web site on February 5.

At the same time, Cancer Research UK, a charitable organization and the publisher of the *British Journal of Cancer*, issued a press release to help the media put the new findings into some kind of context. "So far, studies have shown no evidence that mobile use is harmful, but we can't be completely sure about their long-term effects," explained Lesley Walker, its director of cancer information.

Perhaps, director of cancer *mis*information would be more appropriate. We will not go over —yet again— all the studies that point to a long-term tumor risk. We most recently spelled them out on **January 30** . But we will repeat that when the Interphone data from five Northern European countries were analyzed together, they did point to a higher risk of two different types of tumors and that the U.K. was one of those five countries.

It's true that Walker left open the possibility of long-term effects, but this is just her "get out of jail free" card. She's ignoring the findings already published in peer-reviewed journals on what happens to people who use a cell phone for long periods of time, especially ten years or more. No one is saying there's conclusive proof that cell

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phones lead to cancer, but to say that there is "no evidence" is nonsense.

Walker and others at Cancer Research must know better. Why is the cancer establishment —and Cancer Research UK lies at its summit — so intent on burying the possibility of a cell-phone cancer risk? Why is it behaving just like an industry lobby group?

We should note that despite all the reassuring headlines prompted by the new Japanese paper (and its accompanying press release), it adds practically nothing to our understanding of the long-term risks. For gliomas, the type of brain tumor found elevated in past studies, there were only seven cases who had used a cell phone for more that six-and-a-half years and only *two* cases for ten years or longer. Even the Japanese acknowledge that the ten-year numbers are "very small." The total study population included 83 cases with a glioma.

We hear that some progress is being made towards breaking the deadlock and completing the final Interphone paper. Elisabeth Cardis, the Interphone study director, leaves IARC in just over a month. That's not much time to maneuver if the paper is to be submitted before she decamps for Barcelona.

Interphone, Japan, Masao Taki, Naohito Yamaguchi, Toru Takebayashi, Cancer Research UK, Elisabeth Cardis,

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