Getting It Wrong, Wrong, Wrong

New Book Dismisses Cell Phone Cancer Risks

December 5, 2016
Last updated December 9, 2016

Geoffrey Kabat offers a remarkably apt critique of his *own* writings with his answer to the question, "Do Cell Phones Cause Brain Cancer?":

> "The problem with research in this area is not that it is worthless but that all too frequently it is interpreted naively and uncritically and used for partisan rather than scientific purposes."

That's from his new book, *Getting Risk Right*. It may be the only thing he gets right in the whole book. Hard to say because after reading the chapter on cell phone radiation, we didn't see the point of slogging on much further.

Much of what Kabat has to say is yet another assault on Lennart Hardell and the IARC designation of RF radiation as a possible cancer-causing agent. Kabat blames IARC for having "added to the confusion" because, he believes, the public cannot tell the difference between probabilities and sure things.

He offers the same old arguments to counter Hardell. Why, Kabat asks, if cell phones cause cancer, aren't we seeing an increase in brain tumor rates by now. As we noted when the *New York Times* rolled this out not long ago, one type of brain tumor is going up while others are going down. One trend obscures the other. The bad news is that the type going up is the deadliest kind, glioblastoma multiforme (GBM). This is happening in the U.S., in Australia, in The Netherlands, most likely in Denmark and maybe elsewhere too. No one yet knows why more people are getting GBM, but cell phones are one possibility.

Another reason to reject Hardell, according to Kabat, is that most animal studies "show no evidence of RF of the type emitted by mobile phones is carcinogenic in laboratory rodents." Timing, as they say, is everything and it's working against Kabat. The NTP's

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$25 million rat study, released last May, shows elevated rates of brain cancer. It makes this line of attack moot.

Kabat would have us believe that Hardell's results stand alone but in fact, they have more in common with those of Interphone than he is willing to admit. Kabat conveniently skips over the French CERENAT study, which also supports Hardell. He has confidence in only one epi study: the Danish Cohort Study. We wrote a detailed critique of that wrongheaded effort five years ago. To be blunt, it's garbage. The IARC RF panel rejected it as seriously flawed, so should everyone else.

Who does Kabat trust? Industry consultants like John Moulder and Mike Repacholi. Neither has had any qualms about selling out public health for industry cash.

Kabat, an epidemiologist at Albert Einstein medical school in New York City, gives the last word to a biostatistician who tries to compensate for what he doesn't know about RF radiation with a good sound bite: "Anything is a possible carcinogen," he said, "This is not something I worry about and it will not in any way change how I use my cell phone." Kabat wants you to know that his expert offered this opinion while talking on a cell phone. (Kabat writes an occasional column for *Forbes.com*, where this type of pseudoscience might play better.)

Let's be clear. It's too early to say whether Hardell is right or wrong and whether cell phones can cause cancer. But we do have enough information that simple denial is no longer a tenable option. Precautionary policies, as adopted in a number of countries, should now be the rule rather than the exception.

Kabat's book is nothing more than tendentious drivel, masquerading as common sense.

Geoffrey Kabat, brain cell phones, Interphone, Danish cohort study, Lennart Hardell, John Moulder, Michael Repacholi, NTP, New York Times,

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