TV News on Mobile Phones and Health (Seven Videos)

April 10, 2009

Shows on cell phone radiation are all over the TV news —at least in Australia and Europe, if not the U.S.

One theme that runs through many of these programs is impatience over the delays in the publication of the Interphone results. In a Swiss documentary, aired on March 31, Christopher Wild, the new head of IARC, expresses his concern over the reputation of IARC and says that he looks forward to its completion "in the coming months." Elisabeth Cardis, the head of Interphone, concedes to that same Swiss TV reporter that Interphone is indeed taking a long time to finish (see "Interphone Project: The Cracks Begin To Show"). A few days earlier in an unrelated e-mail, Cardis stated that the results would be submitted for publication "in the coming weeks."

In early April, on consecutive nights, two major news magazine shows in Australia, each aired a detailed, hard-hitting report on cancer risks: "Scientists Speak Out on Mobile Phone, Cancer Link" by Ticky Fullerton of the Australian Broadcasting Corp.'s *Lateline* and "Wake Up Call" by Liam Bartlett of ninemsn's *Sixty Minutes.* Both programs include interviews with Rodney Croft, the head of the Australian Centre for Bioeffects Research (ACBR) in Melbourne, who maintains that there are no cancer risks associated with mobile phones (see also Cell Phone Link to Tumors? — "We Don't Know"). Here's what Croft told *Lateline*:

> There really has been a lot of research done to date and the research has very clearly shown that there aren't any effects. With children, I really don't think that there is any evidence suggesting that this might be a problem. There isn't anything to suggest that we may have to be a little bit more cautious.

A little later, Croft acknowledges that he has himself seen non-thermal effects of GSM radiation in his laboratory:

> We've been exploring effects on mobile phones on very subtle changes to brain function. We have been finding reliable changes in a particular frequency of brain activity called the alpha rhythm.

When Fullerton follows up and asks, "Why is it such a leap of faith to think that if there's a biological change, that that might not be a health impact?", Croft maintains that the only known effects are thermal and suggests that a piece of wood may present a greater risk to the brain than a cell phone:

> I think one of the reasons is that the only known mechanism for interaction is heating. But we must remember that it's also possible that holding a block of wood to your head, which is going to increase the temperature by more than the radiofrequencies, could cause a problem.

Bruce Armstrong, an epidemiologist who is coordinating Australia's Interphone group, declined to be interviewed by *Lateline.* Instead, the program ran clips of his talk at an ACBR conference where he advocated precaution because of the possibility of a tumor risk following long-term use of a mobile phone (see our report). Croft does not agree. "I certainly do not believe that it is as strong as what [Armstrong] would think," he tells Fullerton.

Here are the details for seven recent videos from Australia and Europe, with the most recent first:

April 3 in Australia: "Wake Up Call" (in English, includes transcript, 14 minutes). This is largely a profile of John Bryant, who blames his brain tumor on cell phones. His neurosurgeon, Charles Teo, says: "If the question is do I believe that mobile phones can cause brain cancer? The answer is yes, I do." Teo also gives this warning: "I'm incredibly worried, concerned, depressed at the number of kids I'm seeing coming in with brain tumors. Malignant brain tumors. Just in the last three or four weeks I've seen nearly half a dozen kids with tumors which really should have been benign and they've all been nasty, malignant brain tumors. We are doing something terribly wrong."

April 2 in Australia: "Scientists Speak Out on Mobile Phone, Cancer Link" (in English, includes transcript, 20 minutes). In addition to interviews with ACBR's Croft, Fullerton also talks to Devra Davis of the University of Pittsburgh, neurosurgeon Vini Khurana, Colin Roy of Australia's radiation protection agency (ARPANSA) and *Microwave News'* Louis Slesin. In the course of her research, Fullerton discovered that ARPANSA had neglected to cite the fact some Interphone studies have seen a link between long-term use of cell phones and the incidence of brain tumors (gliomas) on its Web site —much like Anders Ahlbom's committee report to SSI (now called the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority), ARPANSA's Swedish counterpart, did last year (see our March 14, 2008 post). ARPANSA has now acknowledged this omission and includes it on its Web site.

March 31 in Switzerland: "Waves: You Are Surrounded" (in French, 29 minutes). In addition to Interphone's Cardis and IARC's Wild, there are interviews with Swedish oncologist and epidemiologist

Lennart Hardell, Mirjana Moser of the Swiss Office of Public Health, and Michèle Rivasi, the vice president of Criirem, an activist group. Two noteworthy sequences: (1) measurements of RF levels from a mobile phone in various settings (e.g. in the city, in the country, in a train or car), and (2) footage from an IEEE/ICES meeting, with background music ("Jumpin' Jack Flash") from the Rolling Stones, taken from a Norwegian TV documentary, "A Radiant Day". (This video, first aired last year, is available with English subtitles —some of the interviews are in English. Emphasis on RF exposure standards and electrosensitivity. Among those interviewed: Igor Belyaev, C.K. Chou, Eva Markova, Gerd Oberfeld, John Osepchuk, Ron Petersen and Mike Repacholi.)

March 28 in Belgium: "Is GSM Radiation Harmful or Not" (in Flemish with many interviews in English, French and German, 44 minutes; to access the Web site of the TV station where this show first appeared, click here). Interviews with Belgian researcher Dirk Adang, VITO's Gilbert Decat, Green Party Member of the Flemish Parliament Rudi Daems, Sweden's Hardell, Brussels' Minister Evelyne Huytebroeck, Austria's Michael Kundi and Gerd Oberfeld and GSM Association's Jack Rowley, as well as a number of men and women who are electrosensitive.

March 28 in France: "Mobile Phones and Towers: Danger?" (in French, 19 minutes). Interviews with Françoise Boudin, director of the Health and RF Foundation and David Servan-Schreiber, a neuroscientist at the University of Lyon. Includes a panel discussion with André Aurengo, a member of the Academy of Medicine, Pierre Bouvet, a cardiologist and environmentalist, and Nathalie Kosciusko-Morizet, a minister with responsibility for the development of the digital economy.

March 28 in France: "Waves That Shock" (in French, 30 minutes). Mainly on cell towers. Interviews with Aurengo, Oberfeld, Rivasi and Servan-Schreiber, as well as with Jean-Marie Danjou of the French Association of Mobile Operators, Martine Hours, the head of the French Interphone team, Pierre Le Ruz, president of Criirem, Gérard Ledoigt, who has investigated the effects of RF on tomato plants, Thierry Philip, a cancer researcher, and Cindy Sage on behalf of the BioInitiative working group.

March 17 from European Parliament TV: "ACTION: Mobile Phone Health Threat Should Not Be Waved Off Lightly" (in French and Italian, with subtitles in all EU languages, 15 minutes). Features an interview with Frédérique Ries a member of the European Parliament from Belgium, who drafted a report on EMF health risks adopted by the parliament, and an accompanying resolution.

Michael Repacholi, cancer, WHO, cell phones, Anders Ahlbom, Bruce Armstrong, Australia, IARC,

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