U.S. FDA: Cell Phone Radiation Is Safe

July 6, 2009

The FDA has closed down its Web site, *Cell Phone Facts: Consumer Information on Wireless Phones*. In its place, the agency has posted a few Web pages to assure the public that RF radiation from mobile phones is safe.

The new text on the Health Issues page is limited to just 330 words. It opens: "Many people are concerned that cell phone radiation will cause cancer or other serious health hazards. The weight of scientific evidence has not linked cell phones with any health problems." Even in the small amount of space devoted to the topic, the FDA reiterates this no-risk message over and over again. In the second paragraph, the agency advises: "The majority of studies published have failed to show an association between exposure to RF from a cell phone and health problems." And, does it once more in the next paragraph: "Whereas high levels of RF can produce health effects (by heating tissue), exposure to low-level RF that does not produce heating effects causes no known adverse health effects."

The FDA is taking no chances. The same theme is repeated many more times. Here's the FDA on —
Children and Cell Phones: "The scientific evidence does not show a danger to any users of cell phones from RF exposure, including children and teenagers";
Reducing Exposures: "If there is a risk from being exposed to radiofrequency energy (RF) from cell phones —and at this point we do not know that there is— it is probably very small";
and Research: "Is there a connection between RF and certain health problems? The results of most studies conducted to date say no. In addition, attempts to replicate and confirm the few studies that have shown a connection have failed."

The old Web pages included references to new research studies, especially those from the Interphone study. These have all been deleted. The brief discussion of risks to children cites the Stewart

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report, issued nine years ago (*MWN,* M/J00, p.1). (It was the first to advise that children should be discouraged from using cell phones.) The FDA dismisses this warning too: "[The Stewart report's] recommendation to limit cell phone use by children was strictly precautionary; it was not based on scientific evidence that any health hazard exists." The FDA does not mention the similar advice given by high-level groups in Finland, France, Germany and Russia, among others, based on epidemiological studies that point to higher tumor risks among long-term users (see our post of **January 23, 2009**).

The original *Cell Phone Facts* Web site was set up in 2001 jointly by the FDA and the FCC in response to criticisms from the General Accountability Office (GAO), the investigative arm of the U.S. Congress. In its report, the GAO faulted the two agencies for failing to provide the public with "clear and concise information" on cell-phone health issues (see *MWN,* M/J01, p.6). The report was requested by Sen. Joe Lieberman (D-CT) and Rep. Ed Markey (D-MA), both of whom are still in Congress.

The decision to eliminate most of the information on the *Cell Phone Facts* Web pages was made by the FDA, sources told *Microwave News.* Now that they are gone, the FCC offers more information on its Web site than does the FDA —see the FCC's Frequently Asked Questions on RF Safety. (Under the law, the FDA has the lead authority to address cell phone radiation risks.) The FCC Web pages still have many links to the *Cell Phone Facts* Web site, all of which now lead to the same dead end.

This spring, Abiy Desta, who serves as FDA's point man on cell phone safety, set up the RF Bioeffects Technical Group to update the agency's assessment of RF health risks. As part of that process, Desta solicited opinions from various "stakeholders." Among those invited were Cindy Sage and David Carpenter, who led the team that put together the BioInitiative Report. "The meeting itself was not unpleasant, just not in any way substantial," Carpenter told us. "There was no indication that there would be actions of any consequence."

"David and I flew to Washington in April, to persuade the FDA to update its Web site. We felt it should take into account all the new tumor studies and issue tougher warning statements like the rest of the world is doing," Sage said in an interview. "I never dreamed they would gut it."

Desta declined to comment. Instead, he referred *Microwave News* to Siobhan DeLancey in the FDA Office of Public Affairs. She would only say that many of the old links no longer work because the Web site had been redesigned.

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