U.S. Senate Hearing on Cell Phones and Health: A Recap

September 15, 2009

Yesterday's Senate hearing on *Health Effects of Cell Phone Use,* chaired by Sen. Tom Harkin (D-IA), was a standing-room-only affair. C-Span has posted a complete video and transcript of the 105-minute hearing. (The Senate Appropriations Committee has also posted a video of the hearing.) The prepared testimonies of the witnesses may be downloaded from the Appropriations Committee Web site. There was a last-minute addition to the witness list: Harkin invited Olga Naidenko of the Environmental Working Group (EWG) to testify. See **September 10** for a list of the other witnesses. The hearing was requested by Sen. Arlen Specter. A third senator, Mark Pryor (D-AR), made a brief appearance.

A few sound bites from the hearing:

- "What worried me was that, in my study, I saw consistent positive results and they always appeared where there is biological plausibility. They did not appear in this group or in that group. They appeared in the more than ten years [group], they appeared on the same side where the phone was held, they appeared for the heavy users and they appeared in rural areas compared to urban areas and this also has had biological plausibility … So the fact that all of these indications appeared where they should have appeared told me that it was really a red light. But as a scientist, this is not enough, definitely not for causality, but an indication that, according to my judgment, it is enough in order to advise the precautionary principle" —Siegal Sadetzki on her Israeli Interphone study;
- "While the weight of the current scientific evidence has not conclusively linked cell phones with any health problems, we and other scientific organizations … have concluded that better data are needed to establish any potential risks to humans" —John Bucher;
- "In the present situation of the scientific uncertainty, the statements that the use of mobile phones is safe are premature." —Dariusz Leszczynski;
- "The current scientific evidence does not demonstrate that wireless cause cancer or other adverse health effects" —Linda Erdreich, on behalf of the CTIA;

- "I am not alarmed, I am concerned" —Devra Davis;
- "EWG strongly believes that the government should support additional research into this important health question" —Olga Naidenko;
- "Let me tell you where I come out …We just don't know what the answer is … Precautions are not a bad idea. They may not be a good idea, but they are not a bad idea. And the issue of children is something we should look at a little more closely … We have a duty to do more by protecting children. The question, I think, boils down to what additional studies are necessary" —Sen. Arlen Specter;
"I found this really very interesting and very challenging and I can assure you we are going to do some follow-up on this" —Sen. Tom Harkin.

Some links to the press coverage on the hearing:
- "Researchers Push for New Cell Phone Safety Standards" (CNET);
- "Cell Phones: Feds Probing Health Impacts"; "Cell Phones: Precautions Recommended" and "For Kids: Are Cell Phones Safe?"; (*Science News*);
- "U.S. Senator Promises Look into Cellphone-Cancer Link" (Reuters);
- "Is Your Cell Phone Melting Your Brain? Not Yet" (*PC Magazine*);
- "Experts Urge More Study of Cellphone Radiation, Especially on Kids" (*USA Today*);
- "Scientists Call on U.S Senate To Issue Advice on Mobile Phones" (U.K. *Telegraph*);
- "Cancer Risk of Cell Phones Debated" (*Detroit News*);
- "Mixed Verdict on Mobile Phones as Cancer Cause" (Voice of America);
- "Cell Phone Radiation Risks: Why the Jury's Still Out" (*Time*);
- "Is Cell-Phone Safety Assured? Or Merely Ignored?" (*BusinessWeek*);
- "More Research on Cell Phone Safety Needed, Experts Say" (American Cancer Society);
- "Safety Advocates Gain Ground in Cell Phone Debate" (*Contra Costa Times,* California);
- "How Safe Is Your Mobile Phone?" (*The Age,* Australia);
- "Cell Phones and Cancer - How To Stay Safe" (Dr. Andrew Weil).

Other resources:
- Sen. Harkin's press release;
- CTIA's press release;
- Environmental Working Group's (EWG) report, Cell Phone Radiation Report;
- International EMF Collaborative's report, Cellphones and Brain Tumors: 15 Reasons for Concern, Science, Spin and the Truth Behind Interphone.

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