



A Report on Non-Ionizing Radiation

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2011 Short Takes

David Savitz Says There's "Probably No" Leukemia Risk

August 2, 2011

De-Kun Li's [new study](#), published yesterday, got quite a bit of news coverage with comments from all over. One of the most surprising, at least to us, was from [David Savitz](#), who some 25 years ago was the first to [support](#) Nancy Wertheimer and Ed Leeper's then still controversial [finding](#) linking magnetic fields to childhood leukemia. Here's part of what Savitz [told WebMD](#): "[EMF] has been very, very thoroughly studied, and it really questionable whether it causes any health effects at any reasonable level." We thought we had better check with Savitz to make sure he hadn't been misquoted and to see if, as one might well infer, he had repudiated his [1988 paper](#). "The association with power lines has not been corroborated," he replied. He summed up his position on whether or not there is a link this way: "It really isn't a question of what one study or another says, but rather what the body of literature as a whole says and to me it says 'probably not, but maybe something for relatively high magnetic fields and childhood leukemia'." We wonder what Nancy Wertheimer would say.

Two Questions about the CEFALO Children's Cell Phone Study

July 29, 2011

We pose two questions about the new [children's study](#) on cell phone tumor risks, known as CEFALO:

(1) How many of the health and science reporters who filed stories actually [read](#) the paper beyond the press release and abstract? An even cursory look at the paper would have tipped them off that there was something systematically wrong with the data. Yet, practically without exception, they all bought into the idea that the study added something new. When we interviewed [Martin Röösli](#), one of the lead researchers, he admitted that the no-risk

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conclusion was based on trend data from the Swedish tumor registry, *not* his own study.

(2) Why didn't [John Boice](#) and [Robert Tarone](#) point out any of the problems with the data? Surely that should have been one of their most important duties as commentators. Their editorial stands in sharp contrast to the [one](#) by [Rodolfo Saracci](#) and [Jonathan Samet](#), which accompanied the [Interphone study](#) last year. They took their job seriously and raised important questions that the Interphone team tried to push under the rug.

David Servan-Schreiber Has Died

July 25, 2011

[David Servan-Schreiber](#) died yesterday in France. A brain tumor survivor, Servan-Schreiber was a physician, a health advocate and the best-selling author of [Anti-Cancer](#). He was also the moving force behind an ["Appeal" for precaution](#) in the use of mobile phones, issued in France in June 2008. The following month, [Ron Herberman](#), then at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, issued a [similar advisory](#). While Herberman's call for caution gained national attention, it was later repudiated by the Pittsburgh institute. (For more on Servan-Schreiber's life see the obits in the [Los Angeles Times](#) and the [New York Times](#).)

NCI as a Pacifier

July 19, 2011

The *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* ([JNCI](#)) features a [two-page piece](#) on the IARC decision in its August 3 issue. Many of the usual cast of characters (Feychting, Hardell, Moskowitz, Samet, Swerdlow, Tarone) are quoted *except*, surprisingly, anyone from NCI. Not a word from either [Peter Inskip](#) or [Martha Linet](#) (see [June 29](#)).

And there is this in the third paragraph of the story: "The [NCI], the American Cancer Society and other organizations were at pains to update their online information and reassure worried consumers that the [IARC] action was not based on any clinically meaningful new evidence but merely on an evaluation of the existing literature. Experts repeated the familiar mantra 'more research is needed,' even as newspaper headlines warned of the potential risk."

Is it really the NCI's job to pacify the public about uncertain risks?

More Mixed Messages on Cancer Risks

July 17, 2011

More [mixed messages](#) this weekend. In an interview headlined "[Cell Phones and Cancer: Is There a Connection?](#)," [Nora Volkow](#), while acknowledging the uncertainties in Interphone and other epidemiological studies, continues to argue that precaution is the most sensible course of action. "I would feel confident saying to parents in particular that they should educate their children to avoid using cell phones close to their ears," she says. Volkow, the director of the National Institute on Drug Abuse ([NIDA](#)), made a splash earlier this year with her color brain scans showing that cell phone radiation can [affect brain metabolism](#).

In contrast, today [Siddhartha Mukherjee](#) offers a more skeptical [opinion](#) in the Sunday *New York Times*. It is consistent with what he published in a *Times* magazine [article](#) a few months ago. That was before the IARC decision to classify RF radiation as possibly carcinogenic—in opposition to his own outlook and, he says, that of the [NCI](#) (yet, see [this item](#) below). Mukherjee, a professor at Columbia University who won a [Pulitzer prize](#) this year, calls the difference in opinion about cell phones between IARC and other cancer agencies a semantic one because IARC's "definition of 'possibly carcinogenic' is much looser." The "split," he says, "has had the unfortunate effect of confounding the public, which now does not know which faction to believe." On that last part, we can all agree.

Danes See No Increase in Acoustic Neuroma

June 30, 2011

Danish cancer statistics do not show an elevated risk of acoustic neuroma among those who have used mobile phones for 11 years or more. That's the conclusion of a [paper just posted](#) by the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. [Interphone acoustic neuroma results](#), which, sources say, does point to an increase.

The [summary](#) of the IARC's RF monograph meeting indicates that both the Interphone and Danish reports were considered by the working group.

NCI's Martha Linet Agrees with IARC: "2B" Designation Was the Right Call

June 29, 2011

Updated November 25, 2015

If [Martha Linet](#) had represented NCI at the IARC RF meeting instead of [Peter Inskip](#), she probably would not have [walked out](#) before the final vote. Linet would have likely been part of the near unanimous bloc designating cell phone radiation as a possible cause of cancer—based on an interview with Linet in the *[NCI Cancer Bulletin](#)* posted yesterday evening. "If one keeps in mind that possible means 'maybe,' that fits with the positive reports but overall inconsistent data," she said.

One is left to wonder whether Linet, as Inskip's boss, will ask him to temper the minority opinion he is preparing for the final IARC monograph due out next year. It may be only Inskip's viewpoint but inevitably it'll be seen as NCI's. (On July 6, Linet responded that she agrees with the IARC decision —see below.)

Linet also pointed out that NCI is funding four epidemiological studies on potential risk factors for meningioma, a type of brain tumor. The projects will collect information on cell phone use. That surprised Olga Naidenko of the [Environmental Working Group](#) because past studies have linked cell phones to glioma, acoustic neuroma and parotid gland tumors but not meningioma. "I am afraid that NCI does not want to find a risk," she told us.

July 6, 2011

Martha Linet confirmed to *Microwave News* that she "agrees" with the IARC Working Group's decision to classify RF radiation, including cell phone radiation, as 2B, 'possibly carcinogenic.' Linet, the chief of NCI's Radiation Epidemiology Branch, added that her opinion "does not imply that NCI endorses the IARC report as [NCI is] a research institute and not a policy-making agency."

Humans May Sense Magnetic Fields

June 28, 2011

Birds do it, butterflies do it, and now we learn that people may do it too. A group at the University of Massachusetts Medical School led by neurobiologist [Steven Reppert](#) reports that humans can sense the Earth's magnetic field. The finding prompts the team to suggest "a reassessment of human magnetosensitivity may be in order." Check out the [story in today's New York Times](#) based on an open access paper posted last week by [Nature Communications](#).

WHO EMF Project Silent on Precaution

June 24, 2011

The WHO EMF project in Geneva has updated its [fact sheet on mobile phones \(#193\)](#) in light of the [IARC decision](#). WHO continues to maintain, as it did [last year](#) following the release of the [Interphone study](#), that, "no adverse health effects [due to mobile phones] have been established."

Beyond that, the fact sheet doesn't say much other than that the jury is still out and that more research is needed. What's most notable is what's *not* included. There's nothing about precaution or about discouraging use by children. When the fact sheet was [first revised back in 2000](#) (it was originally issued back in 1998), it paid at least lip service to precaution: "If individuals are concerned..." We asked [Emilie van Deventer](#), the leader of the EMF project, why the health agency has nothing to say about precaution for

exposures to an IARC-designated possible human carcinogen. No word back yet.

U.S. Researchers: Heading Towards Extinction

June 21, 2011

The attendance list for last week's [Bioelectromagnetics Society meeting](#) in Nova Scotia paints a sorry picture of EMF and RF research in the U.S. Of the fewer than 250 who registered (already a small number), only about 50 were Americans, half as many as who came from Europe. Of the 50, maybe just ten do any research at all. If you eliminate those who either collect or qualify for Social Security, there's practically no one left.

When the old timers stop showing up, only the industry reps and their hirelings will be in the room.

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