

Is technology frying our brains?

Posted in [By The Way](#) by [Eileen Yu](#) on 2008/07/25 02:00:12
http://www.zdnetasia.com/blogs/btw/0_3800011236.63005265.00.htm

Couple of years back, my mother would experience headaches and giddiness whenever she was at her work desk. Her colleague who sat next to her would also suffer similar symptoms when she was in the office.

After a series of checks and tests, her office identified a wireless cellular signal booster--which was mounted on the wall directly above my mother's desk--as the key culprit. The device was immediately deactivated and my mother's headaches promptly disappeared.

Whether there was indeed a direct correlation between the wireless device and my mother's passing ailments is still as yet to be proven scientifically. But, the question remains whether sufficient time has passed for the effects of technology on the human body to manifest and be accurately documented.

Researchers believe that every human body goes through minor DNA mutations and hence, in some ways, carries dormant cancer cells. The fortunate ones among us go through life without any of these cells becoming "active" but for most of us, as statistics show, we're likely to end up with some form of cancer-related ailment at a later stage in our life.

It usually takes years, typically [a decade or more](#), for cancerous cells to manifest. What that means is, to accurately observe the effects of technology such as mobile phones, on the human body, we'll have to run health studies that span at least 10 years.

What that also means is, past [reports disputing any links](#) between mobile phones and cancer, could now be wrong. And those Northern Ireland residents in 2002 might have valid reasons to [bring down a mobile phone mast](#), which they said had caused several cancer cases in their area.

This week, the director of a prominent U.S. cancer research institute sent out an unusually strong warning to 3,000 staff and faculty members to limit their cell phone use due to potential cancer risks. The memo from Dr. Ronald B. Herberman was deemed unprecedented as it contradicted past studies, including statements from the U.S. government, which dismissed any association between mobile phones and cancer.

The hubbub raises one key question in my mind: has the mobile phone become like smoking?

By the time the health risks related to tobacco smoking were established, it was too late for those already addicted to the nicotine to turn back. Could the same ring true for [mobile phone addicts](#)?

If indeed researchers are able to come up with concrete evidence that mobile phones will lead to brain tumors and cancer, will you be able to give it up?

And will governments have to legislate that mobile users must leave public areas, and make calls in specially assigned "calling zones" so that others in the area won't absorb any second-hand electromagnetic radiation emitting from their phones?

Try pondering over that when you make your next mobile phone call, handsfree, of course.

Cellphones Not Safe For Kids: US Study

Thursday July 24, 2008

CityNews.ca Staff

http://www.citynews.ca/news/news_25037.aspx

Teenagers are known for their ability to chat on the telephone for extended periods of time - take Luca and Jamie, for example.

While strolling in a Toronto mall, they admitted how long they really spend chatting.

"Um, probably about two hours," laughed one.

"About three or four hours," bragged the other.

But an American health official is raising the alarm about young people using mobile devices, echoing [an earlier warning issued by Toronto Public Health](#).

Approximately 61 per cent of Canadians over 12 own a cellphone.

Are they safe or not? While there's no consensus on the potential adverse health effects of cellphone use, including brain tumours, some experts are warning parents not to take any chances when it comes to their kids.

Dr. Ronald B. Herberman, director of the [University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute](#), has taken the unprecedented step of sending a memo to all 3,000 of his employees, asking them to curtail their cell phone use, and telling their children to use cell phones only in emergencies

He says young people should only use the devices for emergencies because the electromagnetic radiation they produce could increase the risk of cancer in developing brains.

"This potentially could contribute to increased risk for developing brain tumours," Herberman added.

There's no debate that the cell signal gets into the brain, and it gets more deeply into the brain of children than it does to adults," agreed colleague Dr. Devra Davis

"Really at the heart of my concern is that we shouldn't wait for a definitive study to come out, but err on the side of being safe rather than sorry later," Herberman explained.

He advises adult cellphone users to keep the device away from their heads by using the speakerphone or a wireless headset.

The Toronto bulletin claims the long-term effects of using cellphones is unknown and advised not taking any chances when it comes to children. Local officials say young people should use landlines whenever possible, or keep mobile calls short or use a headset.

Some European countries have put precautionary policies in place regarding mobile devices, including England and France. India also adopted a similar stance.

Several studies have found no increased risk of cancer in cellphone users, but some scientists say that users should still be cautious as there's also no conclusive evidence

that the devices are completely safe either.

Some 20 different groups have endorsed the Pittsburgh Cancer Institute's position.

But, as cellphone user Melanie claimed in frustration, "The reports change all the time!"

"And you need your cell phone, so what do you do?"

US cancer boss in mobiles warning

The director of a leading US cancer research institute has sent a memo to thousands of staff warning of possible higher risks from mobile phone use.

Ronald Herberman, of the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute, said users should not wait for definitive studies on the risks and should take action now

Read More:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/7523109.stm>

Please watch the short TV interview on mobile phones with Dr David Carpenter; he is presenting on the opening panel of the Radiation Research Trust conference in September, go to the RRT website to view his profile. <http://www.radiationresearch.org>

TV report:

<http://www.foxnews.com/video/index.html?playerId=videolandingpage&streamingFormat=FLASH&referralObject=2595686&referralPlaylistId=playlist>

Also watch this 5 minute video featuring Devra Davis, Ph.D., MPH, and Director of the Center for Environmental Oncology at the University of Pittsburgh Cancer Institute. She was formerly an advisor to U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Shortcut to: <http://gmy.news.yahoo.com/v/8956904>

Kind Regards,

Eileen O'Connor

Radiation Research Trustee

<http://www.radiationresearch.org>

Head of cancer centre urges staff to limit mobile phone use

- [Ed Pilkington](#) in New York
- guardian.co.uk,
- Thursday July 24 2008

- <http://www.guardian.co.uk/technology/2008/jul/24/mobilephones.cancer>

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The head of a leading cancer research institute based in Pittsburgh has reignited the controversy over the health risks of using mobile phones by sending a warning to the institute's staff that they should limit the use of the devices because of the risk of cancer.

Dr Ronald Herberman's alert to 3,000 faculty and staff of the Pittsburgh Cancer Institute is believed to be the first of its kind from the director of a major research centre. His call for action stands in contrast to the existing advice from many health authorities that have pointed out that evidence of the dangers of mobile phone use is inconclusive.

In a memo posted to the staff, Herberman admits that the evidence was still controversial and no hard conclusions can be reached, but he goes on to say that he has become convinced that there was sufficient information "to warrant issuing an advisory to share some precautionary advice on cell phone use." He has also had his memo peer reviewed by an international panel of more than 20 experts drawn from America, Canada, France, Italy and elsewhere.

He is likely to arouse considerable interest in his warning by adding that he bases it partly on "early unpublished data" from on-going research projects. It is thought that may refer to new findings from a massive on-going monitoring project across 13 countries known as Interphone.

Herberman advises a 10-point programme to reduce the risks of using the devices, which he calls "precautionary".

Top of his list of advised precautions is that children should only use mobiles for emergencies in recognition of the fact that the growing brain tissue of children is likely to be more sensitive to the electromagnetic radiation emitted by them. That is in tune with advice already given by several European countries and Canada.

The list goes much further than most existing advice by advocating steps that include:

- Avoid using cell phones in public places such as buses as you might passively expose your neighbours to radiation;
 - Do not keep phones near your body at night, such as under the pillow;
 - Restrict calls to just a few minutes to avoid accumulation of exposure;
 - Try not to use it where the signal is weak or when moving at speed say in a car or train, as this raises the power of the device as it seeks to find a connection;
- Σ Use hands-free devices and if forced to hold phones to the head switch sides while talking to avoid concentration on one part of the brain.

Herberman's decision to go beyond current medical orthodoxy and advocate immediate measures to reduce risk prompted a sceptical reaction from some colleagues. A British expert on optoelectronics, Professor Will Stewart of Southampton University, said: "One cannot refute the 'early findings from unpublished data' since we have not seen them. But there is enough published data to make the advice sound alarmist."

The Wireless Association, representing the cell phone industry in the US, said "published in scientific journals around the globe show that wireless phones do not pose a health risk".

The largest study published so far tracked 420,000 phone users in Denmark, thousands of whom had used the devices for more than 10 years. It found no increased risk of cancer.

Herberman insists that he is not motivated by any animus towards mobile phones, praising them as a remarkable invention that is here to stay. But he said that conclusive results may not emerge for a very long time until individuals had been continually using the gadgets for 15 or 35 years, as was the case with smoking and lung cancer.

He also pointed to the example of asbestos mines where had more precautions been taken on the early tentative advice of scientists, lives could have been saved.

Informant: Martin Weatherall

[See also under: <http://omega.twoday.net/stories/5078849/>]