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## Leszczynski: FCC, IEEE and ICNIRP should tighten safety standards

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Photo: author

Tuesday, April 9, 2013 - Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Dariusz Leszczynski

Dariusz Leszczynski



Ask me a question.

**HELSINKI**, Finland, April 9, 2013 – Current safety standards for the radiation emissions from cell phones are old. FCC standard is from 1996 and ICNIRP from 1998. Since that time, a large number of research studies have been published, some of which pointed towards the possible health risk of exposures to cell phone radiation.

In May 2011, the International Agency for Research on Cancer invited 30 experts to evaluate scientific evidence concerning the carcinogenicity of cell phone radiation.

As a result of nearly 2 weeks of deliberations, IARC experts voted to classify the cell phone radiation as a possible carcinogen, a class 2B carcinogen. In everyday language it means that although we do not have ultimate proof that cell phone radiation is carcinogenic, we have enough scientific evidence to suspect such possibility and be cautious when using these devices.

The decision of the international experts was based mainly on the epidemiological evidence and on the evidence provided by the animal studies. The evidence provided by the laboratory studies was considered too weak to strengthen the classification of carcinogenicity and put it into class 2A carcinogen category, which is a probable carcinogen.

The classification of cell phone radiation as a possible carcinogen came as a great surprise to the scientific community and to the industry alike. Those who disagreed, called the classification flawed and a variety of second-hand "spin" stories were published in the news media denouncing the classification.

**Saying that the IARC classification is flawed is incorrect for the following reasons:**

Epidemiological evidence coming from the European Interphone project and from the Hardell group in Sweden suggested a possible increase in brain cancer among the long-term avid users – people who used cell phones for 30 minutes per day for over 10 years. Both, Interphone and

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Hardell, have shown such trend, though the risk increase differed. [already after the IARC classification meeting was published a study showing an increase of brain cancer in the USA that agreed with the predictions of the Interphone project but not with the Hardell studies]

Animal studies, where cell phone radiation was used alone, showed no effect, but such outcome does not necessarily mean that the humans are safe. Health agencies consider that when cancer is found to be induced by a carcinogen in two different animal species then it is likely that humans will be also vulnerable. However, **when the carcinogen has no effects on animals, does it mean that humans are safe?** Interpreters of cell phone radiation animal studies seem to think so when they point out to the studies where the life-time exposure of rats or mice did not cause cancer. This, however, does not mean that humans are safe. Humans have the same genes as mice or rats but the same genes might work differently in humans and in animals. The best example is the family of three ras-genes, known to be involved in carcinogenesis and present in humans and in mice. However, a different member of the ras-family-genes regulates carcinogenesis in humans and different in mice. It means that some tumors that mice will develop humans will not and vice versa. Finally, animal studies can be performed only at low level exposure to cell phone radiation, similar to levels that humans are exposed, because high level exposures cause heating-associated health effects. Therefore, **if the animal does not respond to a low-level of carcinogen it does not automatically mean that humans are safe.**

Animal studies where cell phone radiation was used in addition to other carcinogen have indicated a possibility of additive or synergistic effects. Cell phone radiation seemed to potentiate the effects of other carcinogens.

Although neither epidemiological nor animal studies provided fully reliable proof of harm, these studies provided sufficiently important "red flags" that could not be ignored. This reflected in the voting. **Out of the 30 members of the IARC Working Group, 28 voted for the 2B classification.** Calling it "flawed" is not correct

**What might be the most compelling evidence of health risk, although it is not proof of harm, is the following:**

Epidemiological studies from the Interphone project and from the Hardell group were performed using **regular cell phones**, bought by the people off the shop shelves. These phones, according to FCC, IEEE and ICNIRP, met all required safety standards that are implemented and claimed to protect all users.

Using these **safe phones**, epidemiological studies have shown an **increase in the possibility of developing brain cancer** among the long term avid users of cell phones. This indicates likelihood that the current safety standards are insufficient to protect the health of cell phone users.

**In order to protect the general public, FCC, IEEE, ICNIRP should immediately implement the Precautionary Principle in the matter of cell phone radiation and tighten the current safety standards.** Also, a targeted and vigorous research program should be established to better evaluate the possible health risks that might be associated with the long-term avid use of cell phones.

\*\*\*\*\*

Read more from Dariusz Leszczynski in his science blogs "[BRHP - Between a Rock and a Hard Place](#)" and "[The Round-Table Initiative](#)".

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