Five European Countries See Long-Term Brain Tumor Risk

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An international team of researchers has found new evidence that long-term use of a mobile phone may lead to the development of a brain tumor on the side of the head the phone is used. In a study which will appear in an upcoming issue of the *International Journal of Cancer,* epidemiologists from five European countries report a nearly 40% increase in gliomas, a type of brain tumor, among those who had used a cell phone for ten or more years. The increase is statistically significant. In addition, there was a trend showing that the brain tumor risk increased with years of use. The new paper is posted on the journal's Web site.

This is the second type of tumor that has been linked to long-term cell phone use. In 2004, the Swedish Interphone group reported a doubling of acoustic neuromas among people who had used a mobile phone for ten years or more.

The new study, part of the 13-country Interphone project, is based on the data collected in Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden and the U.K. Last year, the German Interphone team also reported an increase in gliomas following more than ten years of mobile phone use. (See: "Is There a Ten-Year Latency for Cell Phone Tumor Development?")

The new five-country study included 1,521 glioma cases and 3,301 controls. There were 143 cases with ten or more years of mobile phone use. The earlier German study had only 12 cases who had used a cell phone for at least ten years.

Another research group, led by Lennart Hardell of Örebro University and Kjell Hansson Mild of the National Institute for Working Life, both in Sweden, have also found an increased risk of brain tumors and acoustic neuromas following ten years of cell phone use.

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"The [new] study shows that the issue is not settled and that more data, preferably prospective data, are needed," Anders Ahlbom of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm told *Microwave News*.

Anssi Auvinen of the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority (STUK) in Helsinki, a member of the Finnish Interphone study team offered a similar conclusion. "We need more research on long-term use," he stated in a press release issued today.

In fact, on Saturday, the London *Times* revealed that Lawrie Challis, the head of the U.K. research effort on mobile phones and health, known as MTHR, is in the final stages of negotiations for a study of 200,000 mobile phone users who will be monitored for cancer, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases. The story appeared on the front page of the January 20th *Times*.

"We know from smoking and from the bomb falling in Hiroshima that nothing was seen for ten years," Challis told the BBC.

Ahlbom said that the planned study, disclosed by Challis, will be a joint effort of an international consortium consisting, at present, of epidemiologists from Denmark, Finland and Sweden, as well as the U.K.

The London *Times* ran a companion article under the headline: "Could These Be the Cigarettes of the 21st Century? ... 'Absolutely'." And in an editorial, the *Times* applauded the decision to carry out the new long-term study: "The precautionary principle still applies here. Manufacturers should welcome the new study."

At this writing, the cell phone industry had yet to issue any responses to these new developments. But Sheila Johnston, a consultant based in London with close ties to the mobile phone industry, circulated an e-mail this morning calling Challis's announcement a "very sad outcome."

Interphone, brain tumors, Lennart Hardell, Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden, U.K., Anna Lahkola, Anssi Auvinen,

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