MICRO WAVE NEWS

A Report on Non-Ionizing Radiation

SSI and Ahlbom Cherry Pick the Data

Key Brain Tumor Study Ignored

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The Interphone saga gets weirder and weirder. The latest chapter comes with the release, earlier this week, of a status report on EMFs and health by the Swedish Radiation Protection Authority (SSI) [Now the Swedish Radiation Safety Authority, SSM].

Recent Research on EMF Health Risks, the fifth annual report by an independent expert group, covers what was learned about various types of EMFs, from ELF to RF, in 2007. Here we address only what it says about the latest Interphone results —or more precisely, what it does *not* say.

For reasons that we cannot begin to understand, the group headed by Anders Ahlbom of the Karolinska Institute in Stockholm never mentions what is arguably the most important cell phone study published last year: the Lahkola study, an analysis of the Interphone data from five northern European countries. It points to a long-term risk of a brain tumor on the side of the head the phone was used. (See our January 22, 2007 post).

It is impossible that the SSI panel did not know of this meta-analysis. The second author of Lahkola, Anssi Auvinen of Finland's University of Tampere, is a member of the panel, and the Karolinska's Maria Feychting, another Lahkola coauthor, is its scientific secretary. Indeed, Ahlbom is himself associated with the Interphone project and could hardly be unaware of Lahkola.

The Lahkola study was posted online on January 17, 2007 —at the very beginning of the year. For a moment, we thought it might have been included in last year's SSI report. Not so.

Nor was the Lahkola paper the only Interphone study to be ignored by the SSI committee. The French and Israeli papers were also somehow left out. Both indicate a possible long-term tumor risk. (We do allow that the Israeli study was published in December

when this report was being finished, though we suspect that Auvinen and Feychting as members of the Interphone project would likely have been aware of those results and the fact that they would soon be published.)

The panel did cite two new Interphone studies —a German one on acoustic neuroma and Norwegian one on brain tumors. Neither showed an elevated risk.

Why were the three Interphone papers suggesting cell-phone tumor risks shunted aside while those showing no risks included? Is this about the power of money to keep the lid on the cell phone health debate? Is this about political interference?

Whoever or whatever is responsible, it goes much deeper than Sweden's SSI. Of the seven members of the panel, five have strong ties to ICNIRP: Three are members of the commission (Ahlbom, U.K.'s Richard Saunders and France's Bernard Veyret), and two others are members of its standing committees (Finland's Jukka Juutilianen and U.S.' Leeka Kheifets). The report is a reflection of the leadership of the EMF community and it indicates a need for change.

But first, we need an answer to the question: How could these studies have possibly been ignored?

Interphone, Anders Ahlbom, SSI, Swedish Radiation Protection Authority, Sweden, Anna Lahkola, Maria Feychting, Anssi Auvinen, Bernard Veyret, Richard Saunders, Leeka Kheifets, Jukka Juutilainen, ICNIRP,

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