MICRO WAVE NEWS

A Report on Non-Ionizing Radiation

IARC Shuts Down Interphone

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IARC has closed the book on the Interphone project, its study of mobile phone tumor risks. A couple of days ago, the cancer agency quietly issued a final report, stating that its work "has now been formally completed." The report, though dated October 3, 2011, was released on March 16th.

Last October, soon after the Interphone report was completed but months before it was released, IARC began trying to recast the IARC working group's decision, stating that Interphone had "overall" found no association between cell phones and tumor risks. (See "IARC Tries To Play Down Cell Phone Tumor Risks.")

A large trove of Interphone data remains unanalyzed. Notably, IARC will not attempt a joint investigation of the parotid gland tumor risks. The final report makes no mention that the Israeli Interphone team found an association between this type of tumor of the salivary glands and the use of mobile phones. Also left hanging are the tumor location data collected by the Interphone team. Instead, Interphone has given us dueling interpretations of the results, allowing everyone to point to those that they favor. (See, for instance, "Mixed Signals as Epidemiologists Play Tit for Tat.")

Leaving so much data on the table is a "real tragedy," said one researcher when reached on this Sunday evening and told the news. (This person who is close to the project asked that his name not be used.) Few others had heard about it. IARC made the announcement on its Web site on Friday, a textbook time to ensure poor media coverage. No press release was issued.

Chris Wild, IARC's director, long ago gave up on trying to mediate the warring factions within Interphone. Some would say that Wild sent a signal of where he stood when, close to two years ago, he brought Joachim Schüz, a leader of the no-risk Interphone camp, to IARC as one of his principal deputies. Wild may have brushed Interphone under the IARC rug, but the controversy will not go away anytime soon.

Interphone leaves an indelible blot on IARC's reputation —one from which it will not soon recover.

IARC, Interphone, Christopher Wild, Joachim Schüz,

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