IARC Welcomes Industry to RF–Cancer Review

March 23, 2011

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has invited three industry operatives to sit in on its weeklong assessment of the cancer risks associated with exposure to wireless radiation and other sources of RF/microwave radiation. Representatives from CTIA, the Wireless Association, the Mobile Manufacturers Forum (MMF) and the GSMA will all be allowed to attend the IARC review. The meeting will be held in Lyon, France, May 24-31.

Two of the three, MMF's Joe Elder and CTIA's Mays Swicord used to work for Motorola's RF/MW research group in Florida. Jack Rowley will be there on behalf of the GSM trade group. The only other observers at the meeting will be Claire Marrant of France's Léon Bérard Centre and Robert Nuttall of the Canadian Cancer Society.

By the end of the meeting, IARC's invited participants will decide whether RF/MW radiation should be designated a possible or probable human carcinogen, or whether there isn't enough evidence to reach a conclusion. It is unlikely that RF/MW radiation will be designated as either a known human cancer agent or as cancer safe, the other two IARC classifications. The IARC panel will later issue a Monograph to explain the basis for its decision.

IARC Monographs are widely considered the gold standard for determining which chemical and physical agents can or may lead to cancer. The IARC decision on RF/MW radiation will likely govern official perceptions of the cancer risk from mobile phones for the foreseeable future.

The official IARC panel will consist of 31 invited members from 13 different countries. They include Sweden's Anders Ahlbom, Australia's Bruce Armstrong, Germany's Maria Blettner, Spain's Elisabeth Cardis, and Canada's Jack Siemiatycki, all of whom worked on IARC's Interphone project. In addition, Joachim Schüz,

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another Interphone member, is now on the IARC staff and on the meeting's attendance list.

Eight of the 31 members of the IARC panel are from the U.S., the most from any single country. For a complete list of the panel members and observers, click here. IARC is scheduled to release the list tomorrow, March 24th. The list includes four representatives from international health agencies.

Niels Kuster will also attend the meeting as an "invited specialist," the only person so designated. Kuster is the head of the IT'IS Foundation for Research on Information Technologies in Society in Zurich. The foundation has had long standing ties to industry; Motorola and Nokia were instrumental in setting up IT'IS in 1999.

According to IARC guidelines, observers at Monograph meetings are only allowed to "observe" what goes on and must not "attempt to influence its outcome" nor "lobby" the participants "at any time." Observers are not allowed to offer meals, drinks, social invitations or "other favors" to members of the panel.

In 2001, IARC assembled a panel to review power-frequency EMFs (the EMF Monograph was published in 2002). That panel designated EMFs as a possible human carciniogen (see *MWN,* J/A01, p.1). At that time, not only was industry allowed to attend as observers, but also as members of the reviewing panel itself. For the power-line EMF meeting, IARC invited representatives from EPRI, the electric utility research group, and Exponent, a consulting firm. A number of those on the EMF panel are also on the RF/MW panel, including Carl Blackman, David McCormick and Chris Portier, all of the U.S., as well as Finland's Jukka Juutilainen, Switzerland's Meike Mevissen and Germany's Joachim Schüz.

Microwave News applied for observer status to attend the RF/MW meeting, but the request was denied because, according to IARC, "the presence of journalists or reporters during IARC Monograph meetings could disrupt the atmosphere of free and frank discussion among scientists." (IARC also refused to allow *Microwave News* to attend the EMF meeting ten years ago.)

Earlier this month, on learning that IARC would allow industry to attend the May meeting, *Microwave News* appealed to Christopher Wild, the director of IARC, asking once again for permission to come to the RF review. *Microwave News* called IARC's rationale for barring the press a "ruse" because, we wrote, "Any arguments made at the meeting would seek to influence other members of the Monograph panel and should therefore be able to be aired in public after the meeting… If not, they should probably have been left unsaid."

"[IARC rules] do nothing to stop interactions between industry observers and members of the IARC panel at other times --for instance, at coffee breaks, over drinks, during meals," we said. By being in the room, observers will know what is on the panel's agenda and will have access to the panel members many times over the weeklong session. Where does a friendly chat turn into

lobbying? [We] don't know, but would say the line between the two is, at best, fuzzy."

Microwave News also wrote to Director Wild:

> "Just about every single human being on the planet now uses or will soon use a mobile phone —and will be affected by the working group's decision in Lyon in May. The credibility of the panel's decisions will surely be questioned when people find out that industry was invited to the meeting and the press was barred. IARC's perceived commitment to public health hangs in the balance. The best way for IARC to win the trust of the public is to make the process as open as possible. Daylight, as one of our Supreme Court Justices said nearly a century ago, is the best disinfectant."

That second request was also denied.

IARC, CTIA, MMF, Mays Swicord, IT'IS, David McCormick, IITRI, NIEHS, Christopher Wild, Christopher Portier, Joe Elder,

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