

**Support
Microwave News,
the independent
source for news and
opinion on the health
effects of EMFs and
RF radiation**

Microwave News is now distributed free of charge, so we need your support more than ever. Please send us what you can. See the form on p.4.

Thank you!

The Web and pdf versions of this issue have useful links to people, organizations and publications.

A complete archive of *Microwave News*, 1981-2010, is available on our Web site, <www.microwavenews.com>.

MICROWAVE NEWS • ISSN 0275-6595 • 155 East 77th Street, New York, NY 10075 • (212) 517-2800 • Fax: (212) 734-0316 • E-mail: <info@microwavenews.com> • Web: <www.microwavenews.com> • Editor and Publisher: Louis Slesin, PhD; Assistant Editor: Danny Nassre • Copyright © 2010 by Louis Slesin • Reproduction in any form is forbidden without written permission.

RF Radiation and Health

Where's the Middle Ground ?

February 1... Two news items, both posted today, show once again the polarization within the RF-health community.

The Oman Daily Observer features a report from a meeting held in Muscat over the weekend, under the headline, “**International Conference Allays Fears on Effects of RF Exposure.**” Mike Repacholi, the former head of the **WHO EMF project** and chairman emeritus of **ICNIRP**, is quoted as reassuring the 400-strong audience that none of the close to 3,000 studies that have been done to date worldwide has established that there are any adverse effects below the level set by the international standards. The invited speakers at the meeting reads like a Who's Who of ICNIRP, past and present—including Anders Ahlbom, David Black, Jim Lin, Ken McLeod, Paolo Vecchia, Luc Verschaeve and Bernard Veyret. The cell phone industry was also well represented. Mike Dolan, Mike Milligan and Jack Rowley from the **MOA, MMF** and **GSMA**, respectively, were all on the schedule. Two representatives from **ICEMS**, Libby Kelley from the U.S. and Nesrin Seyhan from Turkey, were also invited. ICEMS, unlike ICNIRP, favors a precautionary approach. Kelley decided to withdraw two weeks ago.

Before we had a chance to finish the story from Oman, we received the **latest bulletin** from **Next-Up**, the European activist group. “Repacholi has betrayed the obligations of his office [at WHO],” it charged, “he is corrupt, he must answer for what he has done. He must be brought to justice!”

Where's the middle ground?

Beyond Risk and Reason

February 6... Assessing health risks is a tricky business. Teaching others how to do it is no easier. To see this, you need to look no further than a recent report from the Geneva-based International Risk Governance Council (**IRGC**), a self-described “independent” group run by a group of government, industry and academic leaders. The title of the report is a mouthful: **Risk Governance Deficits: An Analysis and Il-**

(continued on p.2)

Illustration of the Most Common Deficits in Risk Governance. A better title would have been, Common Pitfalls in Risk Analysis, or perhaps, Risk: A Guide to Better Decision Making.

The handbook runs 91 pages with case studies on hot-button issues, including genetically modified food, mad cow disease and EMFs. It offers some sensible recommendations, such as: Don't provide biased, selective or incomplete information about potential risks, especially from stakeholders who may seek to advance their own interests (pp.22-23). Just about everybody would agree with that advice, but when the report turns to EMFs, forget about it. Once again, the basic rules governing conflicts of interest don't apply to EMFs.

Here's the summary of the **EMF case study** reprinted in the IRGC report:

We conclude that risk management of EMFs has certainly not been perfect, but for power-frequency EMFs risk management has evolved and can be largely considered a success. Lessons from the power-frequency experience can benefit risk governance of radiofrequency EMFs and other emerging technologies. (p.68)

A success? Hardly. The only EMF success stories over the last 30 years tell how the electric utility and cell phone industries have prevailed—largely by suppressing research and marginalizing the health issue. We have made very little progress understanding what power-line or cell phone EMFs do to us over the last 25 years, and that owes a lot to the success of their game plan.

The case study itself paints an even rosier picture:

The main lesson to be learned from power-frequency experience is that an open and proactive approach to research allowed for a successful management of a potentially volatile issue that could have had tremendous societal costs. While some uncertainty remains, it is widely accepted that the health effect, even if real, is not of major public health significance.

If this reads like industry propaganda, that's because it is. The case study was written by two long-time operatives of the electric utility industry: Leeka Kheifets and John Swanson (together with Shaiela Kandel, an Israeli associate). Anyone with even the most rudimentary knowledge of the EMF health issue would be aware that Kheifets has been associated with **EPRI** for most of her professional career and that Swanson is an employee of the **National Grid**, one of the world's largest electric utilities. Clearly,

they are “stakeholders” of the utility industry and IRGC should have asked a more neutral party to write the EMF case study, if it had operated under its own rules. (For more on Kheifets and Swanson's activities, see “**The Real Junk Science of EMFs**.”)

If those who teach us the rules of conduct can violate them with such ease, what hope can there be for evenhanded risk assessment?

One of the four principal authors of the IRGC report is **John Graham**, who is himself a controversial figure in the risk business. He was the founder of the **Harvard Center for Risk Analysis**, whose **corporate sponsors** read like a roster of the S&P500. More surprising is that the chair of the IRGC's Scientific and Technical Council is **Granger Morgan** of Carnegie Mellon University (CMU). Morgan was a coauthor of an influential **EMF report** back in 1989—the first to introduce the concept of precaution for EMF health risks; they called it “prudent avoidance.” (One lesser known fact: Morgan was Graham's thesis advisor at CMU.) Graham is no stranger to EMFs either. He provided cover for **George Carlo**'s research project for the cell phone industry. Carlo paid Graham's Center for Risk Analysis over \$400,000 to help him camouflage the fact that Carlo's enterprise, known as WTR, was a scam, whose primary objective was to avoid doing health research.

Swiss Re, a large reinsurance company, was a sponsor of the IRGC report. Some 15 years ago, Swiss Re issued its own report on EMFs, **Electrosmog A Phantom Risk**, which warned that the EMF problem could “threaten [the insurance industry's] very existence” (see **MWN, J/A97**, p.8). That won't happen as long it's so easy to break the most basic rules of risk and reason.

“Los Angeles Times”: A Detailed Look at EMFs

February 14... Tomorrow's *Los Angeles Times* features a package of four stories on the EMF–health controversy:

- “**On Different Wavelengths over EMFs**”
- “**Victims of Electrosensitivity Syndrome Say EMFs Cause Symptoms**”
- “**Electromagnetic Field Studies Reach Different Conclusions**”
- “**How Strong Are Different Magnetic Fields?**”

Chris Woolston, the *Times* reporter, does not take a stand,

leaving the usual cast of scientists to voice their now well-known opinions. On the there's-nothing-to-worry-about side:

- NCI's **Martha Linet**: She says studies so far suggest a weak connection [between EMFs and cancer], so weak that it might not exist at all.
- University of Pennsylvania's **Ken Foster**: "You have a whole population of people that are scared to death of electromagnetic fields; People latch on to fears that mainstream science doesn't take seriously."
- **Robert Park**, the former DC rep of the American Physical Society: "I don't understand how anyone with a knowledge of science could believe this stuff."

And, on the side favoring precaution:

- New York's Institute for Health and Environment's **David Carpenter**: "It's apparent now that there's a real risk; The evidence is growing stronger every day."
- Cleveland Clinic's **Ashok Agarwal**: Agarwal says there's not enough evidence to tell men with fertility problems to give up their cellphones, although he personally believes that spending 10 hours a day on the phone isn't exactly a fertility-friendly lifestyle, radiation or no.

No sign anywhere of a meeting of the minds.

"Washington Post" Reports Views on Cell Phone Risks

February 16... *The Washington Post's* health section offers its take on the cell phone-tumor story today. In "**Not Exactly a Ringing Endorsement**," reporter John Donnelly presents a variety of opinions from DC area residents: "Everything is a risk. I'm a bodyguard. That's risky. You got to have a life. Cell phones don't scare me," said one. "It makes me nervous," said a pregnant 26-year-old, "I use the speakerphone as much as I can. I keep it away from my body. I try to use it very little."

Donnelly offers a similar wide range of views from those who are more directly involved. "I absolutely believe there is a risk, said **Andrea Boland**, a lawmaker who has introduced the **Children's Wireless Protection Act** in the Maine legislature. It would require cell phones be sold with warning labels. "The peer-reviewed scientific evidence has overwhelmingly indicated that wireless devices do not

pose a public health risk," countered **John Walls**, VP for public affairs at **CTIA**.

NIEHS' **Michael Wyde**, who is running the \$25 million **cell phone animal studies** for the National Toxicology Program (**NTP**), took the middle ground: "Everyone has to make their own decision on whether to limit exposures or not," he told the *Post*.

"Time," "Popular Science," — and "Fortune"

March 4... *Time* magazine has posted a piece on "**Cell-Phone Safety**," which will appear in next week's print edition (March 15).

Also, in its March issue, *Popular Science* offers a detailed look at the EMF controversy. "**Disconnected**" runs a full ten pages, with a promo on the cover: "Killer Cell Phones: The Real Science Behind the Health Scare." The magazine's Web site pitches the story as an exploration of electromagnetic hypersensitivity (EHS): "**The Man Who Was Allergic to Radio Waves**." The "man" is Per Seger bäck, a former Ellemtel telecom engineer who now lives deep in the Swedish countryside.

To see, once again, how little has been learned about EMFs and health over the last generation, take a look at David Kirkpatrick's article, "**Do Cellular Phones Cause Cancer?**" which ran in *Fortune* magazine 17 years ago this week (it too was promoted on the cover). In a sidebar, "**Maybe the Swedes Are Right**," Kirkpatrick cited Seger bäck's case of EHS—though not his name. Years later, Kirkpatrick reported that his 1993 article "caused quite a ruckus," adding that, "Motorola was not thrilled." That was an understatement. Motorola got so ticked off, it pulled all its advertising from *Fortune* for a long time. The magazine lost hundreds of thousands of dollars.

And on TV...

March 11... The CBS Evening News took on the brain tumor-cell phone story tonight with "**Maine Considers Warnings for Cell Phones**." The focus was on State Representative **Andrea Boland's** bill, the **Children's Wireless Protection Act**, which would require cell phones be sold with warning labels. That bill has practically no chance of getting through the legislature. Members of the Health and Human Services Committee unanimously (13-0) op-

posed it earlier in the week, according to the **Associated Press**. And even if the legislature were to pass the bill, Gov. John Baldacci would likely veto it.

Last night, CNN's Campbell Brown ran a segment, "**How Safe Is Your Cell Phone?**" on her prime time news show. Her guests were *Time* magazine's Bryan Walsh who has a **cell-phone feature** in this week's issue and **John Boockvar**, a neurosurgeon at Weill Cornell Medical College in New York City. Boockvar, who appeared on the CNN set wearing his scrubs and white coat, expressed skep-

ticism that there might be any link between cell phones and brain tumors. The RF radiation emissions, he said, "probably do not cause any significant tissue damage that would cause brain tumors to form." He went on to note that the incidence of brain cancer in the U.S. has stayed "relatively stable over the last ten years" as the use of cell phones has risen exponentially. Boockvar joins **Ted Schwartz** as the second Weill Cornell neurosurgeon to take the national stage to downplay public concerns over cell phone risks.

"Harper's" and "Men's Health" on Cell Phones

April 13... Out today: The May issue of *Harper's* magazine with a cover story on mobile phone and other EMF health risks: "**For Whom the Cell Tolls: Why Your Cell Phone May (or May Not) Be Killing You**" by **Nathaniel Rich**.

April 14... *Men's Health* has gotten into the act too. The May issue offers its take on cell phone radiation health risks with "**Is Your Life on the Line?**" by Paul Scott. He covers much of the same ground as Nathaniel Rich in *Harper's*—except his is shorter. Like Rich, Scott begins with the story of Lloyd Morgan, a brain tumor survivor and cell

phone activist, who, Scott says, "has made it his mission to spread the message that cell phone radiation is carcinogenic."

Scott leans towards believing that there may well be a brain tumor risk, but tries to stick to the center. His editors, on the other hand, are playing both sides. In a **separate post**, *Men's Health* lists the question as a phony health scare. That verdict is based on the opinion of **John Moulder**, who has long served as an industry consultant (see "**Radiation Research and the Cult of Negative Studies**").

Unlike *Harper's*, *Men's Health* gives Internet readers free access; *Harper's* wants you to subscribe first.

Please Help Keep Microwave News On the Web

Enclosed is My Contribution of

\$25.00 \$50.00 \$100.00 \$250.00 \$500.00 \$1,000.00 Other \$ ____

Suggested Contributions: Individuals \$50–\$100; Corporations and Institutions \$250–\$500.

**Microwave News, 155 East 77th Street, Suite 3D, New York, NY 10075, USA
☎: +1 (212) 517-2800, Fax: +1 (212) 734-0316; E-mail: <mwn@pobox.com>**