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Biggest ever mobile phone brain tumour study prompts alarm over dangers to children

A new long-term study by the World Health Organisation¹ into the link between mobile use and brain cancer has found that heavy users significantly increase their risk of developing fatal brain tumours.

The results have alarming implications for children, as young mobile users run similar risks to heavy adult users. Studies have shown that children absorb more radiation into their brains.² Having started using mobiles so much earlier, they also face a far higher exposure over their lifetime than adults.

"The results of the Interphone study raise serious concerns about likely effects on children – their biological vulnerability and lifetime use mean they are very exposed," says Dr Grahame Blackwell, a spokesperson for wireless health information charity WiredChild.³

Children were not included in the Interphone study, despite widespread concern among scientists and doctors at the time that they would be more vulnerable. But shortly after Interphone was launched, an official Inquiry prompted the Government to issue a caution on mobile use for under-16s.⁴ Independent studies have backed up the concerns. A recent study at the University of Orebro in Sweden showed that children and teenagers using a mobile run four times the risk of a brain tumour.⁵

Since Interphone was launched, children's use has grown exponentially, while brain cancer among children has also been increasing.

"Why should it come as a surprise that pressing mobile phones to people's ears increases the risk of brain tumours? These findings are completely as expected from other evidence. Children are known to be more vulnerable and we need to take action to protect them," says Professor Denis Henshaw, head of the Human Radiation Effects Group at Bristol University.⁶ "The challenge now is how we respond. Burying our heads in the sand is asking for trouble."

WiredChild believes that the Government should act now to protect children. Spokesperson Dr Blackwell says:

"It's time for the Government to stop saying, like the mobile industry, 'we need more research', to put appropriate warnings on mobile phone packaging, and to issue public cautions over children similar to those appearing in other



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countries.” Last week the French parliament confirmed a ban on mobile phones in primary and middle schools and is requiring phone manufacturers to put health warnings on phones.⁷

“Parents just don’t realise the dangers – which go beyond brain tumours - and the Government needs to inform them, because the manufacturers certainly won’t.”⁸

WiredChild carries information on its website on how to reduce children’s exposure. Go to www.wiredchild.org/parents.html

NOTES

¹ For WHO IARC press release contact Dr Nicolas Gaudin, IARC Communications: gaudin@iarc.fr
tel. +33 472 738 567; +33 680 572 966.

For explanation see Powerwatch review at:

http://www.powerwatch.org.uk/news/20100513_approach_to_interphone_results.asp

² See <http://www.wiredchild.org/component/content/article/46-hidden/75-studies-relating-to-children.html>

³ This was pointed out by the government-commissioned Stewart Report. For example - see paragraph 1.53 at http://www.iegmp.org.uk/documents/iegmp_1.pdf

⁴ See Department of Health leaflet “Mobile Phones and Health” at <http://www.wiredchild.org/government-alias.html>

⁵ See: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19513546>

⁶ Tel. 01179 260353/07773 356442

⁷ <http://www.independent.ie/world-news/europe/mobile-phones-banned-in-french-schools-over-radiation-fears-1751697.html> For more details, contact Daniel Oberhausen at Priartem
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⁸ See <http://www.wiredchild.org/health-effects.html>