



Karolinska Institutet
Department of Neuroscience
Experimental Dermatology Unit

Stockholm, October 7, 2016

To: Superintendent Shay Mikalson [shay.mikalson@bend.k12.or.us]

Principal Wendy Winchel [wendy.winchel@bend.k12.or.us]

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Bend-La Pine Schools
520 NW Wall Street
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cc: All Bend La Pine School Principals

Dear Madame or Sir,

My name is Olle Johansson, and I am an associate professor, heading the Experimental Dermatology Unit at Sweden's Karolinska Institute in the Department of Neuroscience. I understand you have recently made public pronouncements regarding the safety of Wi-Fi. As a neuroscientist who has been studying the biophysical and epidemiological effects of electromagnetic fields (EMFs) for over 30 years, I believe this designation is short-sighted.

Wireless communication is now being implemented in our daily life in a very fast way. At the same time, it is becoming more and more obvious that the exposure to electromagnetic fields not only may induce acute thermal effects to living organisms, but also non-thermal effects, the latter often after longer exposures. This has been demonstrated in a very large number of **non-ionizing radiation** studies and includes cellular DNA-damage, disruptions and alterations of cellular functions like increases in intracellular stimulatory pathways and calcium handling, disruption of tissue structures like the blood-brain barrier, impact on vessel and immune functions, and loss of fertility. Whereas scientists can observe and reproduce these effects in controlled laboratory experiments, epidemiological and ecological data derived from long-term exposures in well-designed case-control studies reflect this link all the way from molecular and cellular effects to the living organism up to the induction and proliferation of diseases observed in humans. It should be noted that we are not the only species at jeopardy; practically all animals, plants and bacteria may be at stake. Although epidemiological and ecological investigations as such never demonstrate causative effects, due to the vast number of confounders, they confirm the relevance of the controlled observations in the laboratories.

Many times since the early 1980s I have pointed out that the public's usage of cell phones has become the largest full-scale biological and medical experiment ever with mankind, and I was also the first person to firmly point out that this involuntary exposure violates the Nuremberg Code's principles for human experimentation, which clearly states that voluntary

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consent of human subjects is absolutely essential. Among many effects seen, the very serious one is the deterioration of the genome. Such an effect - if seen in a food item under development or in a potential pharmaceutical drug - immediately would completely ban it from further marketing and sale; genotoxic effects are not to be allowed or spread. For these reasons above, we, scientists, can not accept that children undergo an enormous health risk for their present and future, by being exposed to WI-FI in kindergardens or schools (even if the WI-FI masts/routers are not in the children's classroom). The precautionary principle has to be respected. Furthermore, when men place cell phones in their front pocket, or laptops on their laps, it should be noted that experimental studies have demonstrated that after similar exposures there is a decrease in sperm count as well as in the quality of sperm, which is a phenomenon that could affect society's overall ability to procreate in the future. Experiments in mice point to that it may be true already in 5 generations time.

Many other states including France, Russia, Israel and Germany, have employed various precautionary steps and their responses (including labelling cell phones and other transmitting devices with SAR ratings, discouraging the use of cell phones and other wireless gadgets by children, warning parents of the risks, and removing or restricting WiFi in schools and replacing it with hard-wired ethernet) as a result of the *WHO/IARC classification of radiofrequency electromagnetic radiation in 2011 as a Class 2B carcinogen as well as the earlier classification of power-frequent magnetic fields in 2001 also as a Class 2B carcinogen*, the information summarized in the Bioinitiative Reports of 2007 and 2012, and the other considerable international and independent research and reviews, that show adverse biological effects from electromagnetic fields, including heart palpitations, headaches, skin rashes, damage to DNA, mental health effects, impaired concentration, decreased problem-solving capacity, electrohypersensitivity, etc., are about to set a new standard for educational quality with due respect to children's and staff's health.

In the case of "protection from exposure to electromagnetic fields", it is thus of paramount importance to act from a prudence avoidance/precautionary principle point of view. Anything else would be highly hazardous. Total transparency of information is the key sentence here, as I believe the public does not appreciate having the complete truth revealed years after a certain catastrophe already has taken place. For instance, it shall be noted, that today's recommended values for wireless systems, such as the SAR-values, are just recommendations, and not safety levels. Since scientists observe biological effects at as low as 20 microWatts/kg, can it truly be stated that it is safe to allow irradiation of humans at SAR 2 W/kg, or at 100,000 times stronger levels of radiation?

IMBALANCED REPORTING

Another misunderstanding is the use of scientific publications (as the tobacco industry did for many years) as 'weights' to balance each other. But one can NEVER balance a report showing a negative health effect with one showing no effect. This is a misunderstanding which, unfortunately, is very often used both by the industrial representatives as well as official authorities to the detriment of the general public. True balance would be reports showing negative health effects against *exact replications* showing no or positive effects. However, this is not what the public has been led to believe.

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NEED FOR INDEPENDENT RESEARCH

In many commentaries, debate articles and public lectures - for the last 20-30 years – I have urged that completely independent research projects must be inaugurated immediately to ensure our public health. These projects must be entirely independent of all types of commercial interests; public health can not have a price-tag! It is also of paramount importance that scientists involved in such projects must be free of any carrier considerations and that the funding needed is covered to 100%, not 99% or less. This is the clear responsibility of the democratically elected body of every country.

WHO/INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR RESEARCH ON CANCER (IARC), 2011

Very recently (in Lyon, France, May 31, 2011) the WHO/International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has classified radiofrequency electromagnetic fields as possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B), based on an increased risk for glioma, a malignant type of brain cancer. This should be added to the previous (2001) 2B classification of power-frequent (ELF) electromagnetic fields – emitted at high levels from handheld gadgets, such as eReaders and mobile phones – as a risk factor for childhood leukemia. Given the 2001 very close votes (9 to 11) for moving it to 2A and all the new knowledge that has accumulated since 2001, today the association between childhood leukemia and power-frequent (ELF) electromagnetic fields would definitely be signed into the much more serious 2A (“probably carcinogenic”) category. So, the ‘red flag’ is – unfortunately – flying very high.

INVOLUNTARY EXPOSURE

According to Article 24 of the UNICEF’s Child Convention “children have the right to ... a clean and safe environment, and information to help them stay healthy”. We must all ensure that this article never is violated. This is about our social responsibility, and is very much a public health issue.

In summary, electromagnetic fields may be among the most serious and overlooked health issues today, and having these fields checked and reduced/removed from schools and kindergardens may be essential for health protection and restoration, and is a must for persons with the functional impairment electrohypersensitivity as for children who are more fragile (cf. Belyaev I, Dean A, Eger H, Hubmann G, Jandrisovits R, Johansson O, Kern M, Kundi M, Lercher P, Mosgöller W, Moshammer H, Müller K, Oberfeld G, Ohnsorge P, Pelzmann P, Scheingraber C, Thill R, "EUROPAEM EMF Guideline 2015 for the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of EMF-related health problems and illnesses", Rev Environ Health 2015; 30: 337–371). In addition, as recently discussed in a think-tank group here in Stockholm, it is very important to constantly educate oneself and participate in the general debate and public discussions to keep the information build-up active. Thus, it is of paramount importance to keep the "kettle boiling", never blindly trusting or accepting given 'facts', but only read and think for yourself and for your loved ones. Only so you can arrive at a genuinely working precautionary principle.

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CONCLUSION

In conclusion, wireless systems, such as Wi-Fi routers or cell towers, and their electromagnetic fields, can not be regarded as safe in schools, but must be deemed highly hazardous and unsafe for the children as well as for the staff.

I encourage governments and local health and educational bodies to adopt a framework of guidelines for public and occupational EMF exposure that reflect the Precautionary Principle. As noted, the Precautionary Principle states when there are indications of possible adverse effects, though they remain uncertain, the risks from doing nothing may be far greater than the risks of taking action to control these exposures. The Precautionary Principle shifts the burden of proof from those suspecting a risk to those who discount it — as some nations have already done. Precautionary strategies should be based on design and performance standards and may not necessarily define numerical thresholds because such thresholds may erroneously be interpreted as levels below which no adverse effect can occur.

Some 100 years back, we learned the hard lessons of ionizing radiation and the need for strict health protections – now we must openly face the possibility that we must take a seat in life's school and learn again. This time it is about non-ionizing radiation.

Based on all of the above, I strongly urge you to reconsider your public stance on the safety of Wi-Fi, cell towers, and similar systems in schools as their non-ionizing radiation emissions very likely are hazardous and unsafe for students, staff and teachers.

With my very best regards
Yours sincerely
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