

Electromagnetic intolerance elucidated

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By André Fauteux, Editor

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In 2002, World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Gro Harlem Brundtland told journalists that microwaves emitted by cellphones made her sick, even if the phone only turned on and hidden in a pocket or purse located up to four meters away. Nonetheless, the World Health Organization stated in 2005 that electrosensitivity symptoms may be of psychosomatic origin, a claim French oncologist Dominique Belpomme says is refuted recent discoveries.

French researchers recently demonstrated that electromagnetic fields (EMFs) substantially alter the physiology of the blood and brain of electrosensitive people and that the impact on these biological markers increases and decreases according to the intensity of EMF exposure.

"We know with certainty that electromagnetic hypersensitivity is not psychosomatic", Dr Dominique Belpomme stated in a [November 2010] telephone interview. "EMFs provoke major effects in the brain. The most important of these is the opening of the blood-brain barrier. This allows mercury, organochlorines and other pollutants to enter in the brain, where they cause various neurodegenerative diseases. "

20 new patients per week

A professor of oncology at Paris-Descartes University, Dr. Belpomme is President of the French Association for Research in Therapeutics Against Cancer (www.artac.info), which has shifted in the prevention from 2004. Since May 2008, his team has studied what he coined the Electromagnetic Intolerance Syndrome (SICEM in French). "I have 450 patients and see up to 20 new cases every week, including children who have headaches, impaired memory, concentration or language. We have the largest European cohort of electrosensitive patients. This is a major public health concern."

The SICEM is an extreme reaction to low-level exposure to 50/60 Hz electric and magnetic fields emitted by electrical cables and devices as well as radio frequencies (10 MHz to 300 GHz including microwave) from wireless devices and antennas.

"In Sweden, electrohypersensitivity (EHS) is an officially fully recognized functional impairment (i.e., it is not regarded as a disease, thus no diagnosis exists), explains Swedish dermatologist and [EHS expert Olle Johannson](#). Thus, the first step for a person in Sweden with a functional impairment is to contact the municipality's special civil servant for disability issues, as well as the various handicap organizations and authorities, to achieve accessibility measures of various types with the sole aim to have an equal life in a society based on equality according to the The UN Convention on Human Rights for Persons with Functional Impairments, www.un.org."

People with EHS are often incorrectly referred in psychiatry while many experts such as Belpomme say the first treatment they require is reducing or eliminating their exposure to EMFS. Their symptoms (neurological, cardiovascular, dermatological, muscular, etc.) are sometimes so serious that they must

shield themselves with special clothing, curtains as well as grounded paints and vapor barriers. Others move into forests, caves or other remote locations if they are unable to find a low-EMF environment where their symptoms can recede or disappear.

Dr. Belpomme's team has developed a diagnostic method based on blood tests and a special brain scan (pulsed Doppler echography) to visualize blood flow. "These patients clearly have vascular disorders in the brain, said the oncologist. In addition, our biological tests show that 30% of them have high levels of histamine, 50% have too much stress proteins, most have low levels of melatonin (an potent anti-cancer hormone), and 30% have levels of antibodies and proteins that are tell-tale signs of thermal shock and brain damage." He adds that half of his patients suffer from Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) and that MCS and EHS share the same brain abnormalities.

The oncologist explained that there are three distinct levels of sensitivity to pollutants. First, there is intolerance, caused by polymorphism. "This means that we are all different. For example, 30% of the population is most at risk of developing cancer."

Second, there is the susceptibility factor demonstrated by Swedish oncologist Lennart Hardell who studied 16 families who were electrosensitive because of shared genetic factors. There are also active susceptibility factors, "such as dental amalgam that behave like antennas capturing airwaves", explains Belpomme.

Finally, electromagnetic hypersensitivity appears in two stages. "The first phase is induced by exposure to a specific EMF frequency, either an acute or chronic exposure, such as talking on a cell phone 20 minutes every day. The first signs of hypersensitivity are pain and a heat sensation in the ear. In the second phase, the disease sets in. That's when you become intolerant at all frequencies."

Experienced researchers

ARTAC's scientific council is chaired by virologist Luc Montagnier, 2008 co-recipient of the Nobel Prize in medicine as co-discoverer of the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) believed to cause AIDS. And its research coordinator is doctor of nutrition Philippe Irigaray, one of five international experts recently appointed by Quebec's Health Research Fund to select the most promising research projects in environmental cancer prevention. Dr Irigaray stresses that the human brain contains magnetosomes, iron oxides that behave like magnets. Electrosensitivity may depend on their quantity, which varies from one individual to another.

ARTAC researchers are currently preparing five scientific papers on electrosensitivity. "It takes a lot of time, said Dr Belpomme. They will published in a year or two. But action is needed immediately to reduce people's overexposure to EMFs."

In France, an estimated 5% of the population is already electrosensitive, and the proportion is constantly increasing with the ever-growing popularity of wireless technologies. "Studies show that 10 to 50% of the population may become very intolerant to EMFs over the next 25 to 50 years, Dr Belpomme said. I have two cases of multiple sclerosis triggered after prolonged use of a cell phone, three cases of breast cancer – two recurrences after exposure to EMFs and one case related to the use of computers – and anecdotal evidence also for autism and Alzheimer's disease whose risk is much higher than for cancer. Causal links with electromagnetic fields are highly possible."

Dr Belpomme said he has relieved some EHS patients by administering medication to tone-up the nervous system and antihistamines to close the blood-brain barrier.

No causal link, says WHO

In 2005, the World Health Organization published Fact Sheet No 296 entitled [Electromagnetic hypersensitivity](#). It stated : "Well controlled and conducted double-blind studies have shown that symptoms were not correlated with EMF exposure... The symptoms are certainly real and can vary widely in their severity... Further, EHS is not a medical diagnosis, nor is it clear that it represents a single medical problem.

Physicians: Treatment of affected individuals should focus on the health symptoms and the clinical picture, and not on the person's perceived need for reducing or eliminating EMF in the workplace or home. This requires:

- a medical evaluation to identify and treat any specific conditions that may be responsible for the symptoms,
- a psychological evaluation to identify alternative psychiatric/psychological conditions that may be responsible for the symptoms,
- an assessment of the workplace and home for factors that might contribute to the presented symptoms. These could include indoor air pollution, excessive noise, poor lighting (flickering light) or ergonomic factors. A reduction of stress and other improvements in the work situation might be appropriate."

Bull, said Dr. Dominique Belpomme. "This setback is of a political nature that has nothing to do with science. WHO will be forced to revise its decision in the coming months. It is a societal denial that does not take account of current knowledge which is constantly evolving. " [\[read Microwave News's coverage of conflicts of interest at WHO\]](#)

The oncologist argues the causal link between exposure to magnetic fields and leukemia is no longer in doubt. "When we increase the dose, it increases the rate of leukemia. Dozens of laboratory toxicological studies have demonstrated this most clearly, in vitro as well as in animals."

For her part, Ontario researcher [Magda Havas of Trent University](#) said EHS studies with negative results have major biases. "The researchers assumed that reactions to EMFs are immediate, while there is often a delay between exposure and response. People are not switches that can be turned on and off. These studies incorrectly insinuate that if you can not feel anything, it can't harm you. We know very well that we can't detect the taste of arsenic, lead, DDT nor asbestos, but they are all toxic."

Further reading:

[Research Studies into Electrical Sensitivity](#)

[Radiofrequency/Microwave Radiation and the International Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#)
The problem of conflict of interest & commercial influence in WHO agencies and the need for public interest representation

[Petition to the World Health Organization to remove Dr. Mike Repacholi immediately from his position as General Coordinator "International Electromagnetic Fields Project"](#)

Mystery in the skin : Screen dermatitis, the effect of computeur work on human skin. (Interview with Dr Olle Johansson)

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