

Mobile Phones may be death sentence

BY DANIELLE CRONIN - HEALTH REPORTER

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Widespread, unchecked use of mobile telephones could potentially pose a greater threat to human health than asbestos or smoking, according to a Canberra neurosurgeon. Vini Khurana held a 14-month investigation into the link between heavy, long-term use of mobile telephones and the development of malignant brain tumours, reviewing more than 100 international studies on the subject. *"There is currently enough evidence and technology available to warrant industry and governments alike in taking immediate steps to reduce exposure of consumers to mobile phone related electromagnetic radiation and to make consumers clearly aware of potential dangers and how to use this technology sensibly and safely,"* Dr Khurana said in 69-page paper published on-line. *"It is anticipated that this danger has far broader public health ramifications than asbestos and smoking and directly concerns all of us, particularly the younger generation, including very young children."*

Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association chief executive Chris Althaus said these findings were contrary to international studies that "overwhelmingly" showed mobile telephones caused no short or long-term health problems. *"There's been more research on this subject than most things, and the World Health Organization, and countless national governments have all come together with that conclusion,"* he said. *"Having said that, the industry certainly looks at ongoing research as part of the responsible monitoring of technology."*

"Therefore, any danger this exposure poses may be easily dismissed. Exposure is long term and its effects on the body, particularly its electrical organ - the brain, are compounded by numerous other simultaneous long-term exposures including continuous waves from radio and TV transmitter towers, cordless phone base stations, power lines, and wireless ... computing devices."

"A malignant brain tumor represents a life-ending diagnosis in the vast majority of [cases]." Dr. Khurana said there was a "significant and increasing" body of evidence that linked mobile phone use and some brain tumors. *"The elevated risk increased the odds and appears to be in the order of two to four-fold,"* he said.

More research was required to determine if brain tumors were actually caused by electromagnetic radiation from mobile telephones. If this was the case, it could pose a bigger threat to human health than asbestos or smoking, because billions of people had mobile phones and more young people were using the technology. He strongly urged the public to take precautions. If possible, children should only use mobile and cordless telephones in emergencies and everyone should choose a "landline".

He recommended that mobile telephones should be set to "speaker" mode and held more than 20cm away from the head. "Electromagnetic radiation ... can heat the side of the head, or pulse it non-thermally, and potentially interact with its organic electrical content the brain," he said. *"Bluetooth devices and unshielded headsets can convert the user's head into an effective, potentially self-harming antenna."* Consumers should limit their use of these accessories.

"Malignant brain tumors may take several years to develop, and the incidence of malignant brain tumors is increasing," he said.

"Unless the industry and governments take immediate and decisive steps to openly acknowledge and intervene in this situation - even while awaiting definitive confirmation by large and well-constructed multi-centre studies worldwide - malignant brain tumor incidence and its associated death rate will be observed globally to rise within a decade from now. By which time it may be far too late to meaningfully intervene, especially for those who are currently children and young adults."

A copy of this paper is available at www.brain-surgery.us