

Roots of Corruption 2



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The Science & Technology Committee received studies and evidence for effects on health in December 2017 and they have to date failed to act on the evidence. Below is the submission of evidence by UK neuroscientist Dr Sarah Starkey to the Westminster Parliamentary Science and Technology Committee for their Inquiry into Early Years Interventions, with a focus on children (info on pregnant women & adults is also included) December 2017. Check out pages 10 - 15. You may want to send this to your MP and ask them to explain why they are not acting on this evidence. Sections of info from the submission is below <http://data.parliament.uk/.../evidencebased.../written/75325.pdf>.

"Current national government advice on the safety of radio frequency signals comes from PHE and is based on an assessment of the evidence by the Advisory Group on Non-Ionising Radiation (AGNIR) in 2012. Local and national government policies and decisions are based on PHE advice.

The AGNIR 2012 report has been shown to be inaccurate, with evidence omitted, conclusions which did not reflect the evidence available, incorrect statements and conflicts of interest¹⁸⁵. AGNIR included members from PHE and ICNIRP¹⁸⁵.

This means that members of PHE as well as members of ICNIRP, who set the international exposure guidelines, have provided inaccurate, incorrect and misleading scientific information. The ICNIRP guidelines no longer reflect the scientific evidence and are no longer protective of human health. We urgently need biologically-based exposure guidelines to protect the population.

AGNIR was closed down in May 2017⁽¹⁸⁶⁾, but the advice based on factually incorrect information remains on the PHE website and continues to be given by PHE to Members of Parliament (MPs), decision makers and members of the public.

The scientists responsible for the inaccurate AGNIR report who are employed by PHE or the Department of Health (DH) continue in their roles and still advise on the safety of wireless

signals. In my view, the evidence points to these employees having broken their employment Code of Conduct(187) and they should be removed from their roles.

We all have a duty to protect children from harm and to speak out when harm is taking place, or where there is the possibility of harm¹⁸⁸. Scientists with a responsibility to advise and protect the public also have a duty to act with integrity. In my view this has not happened with advice from PHE, AGNIR or ICNIRP on the safety of radio frequency signals.

When PHE provide factually incorrect information about the safety of wireless signals it is extremely difficult for local authorities, schools, decision makers and parents to access evidence-based, accurate information and almost impossible for parents to challenge involuntary exposures of their children and to protect them from harm.

So many policy decisions by UK Governments, local authorities, by schools, businesses etc have been made based on the factually incorrect information provided by PHE and AGNIR (regarding the safety of radio frequency signals). Accurate evidence on the safety of wireless technologies is not currently being used effectively in policy-making.

In my view the incorrect conclusions, conclusions omitted and inaccurate statements were not accidental mistakes; evidence was covered-up. Perhaps the misinformation was to protect ICNIRP guidelines (by ICNIRP members in AGNIR), or to protect the current and future proliferation of wireless technologies, or because once decisions have been made based on misinformation, it is very difficult to admit to the evidence.

Part of AGNIR's role was to recommend research priorities. Interventions are the responsibility of PHE and the DH. But both AGNIR and PHE provided inaccurate information about the effects of radio frequency signals and concluded that there were no adverse effects below current ICNIRP guidelines.

For years Members of Parliament and Local Authorities have been repeating PHE advice, unaware that it was based on an inaccurate report⁽¹⁸⁵⁾. There was either no oversight of the AGNIR research report or it was ineffective at picking up the inaccurate and misleading reporting. Having processes in place to hold PHE to account and to be able to challenge inaccurate information would help to prevent this happening in the future.

Given the widespread use of wireless devices and compulsory exposure of the whole population to radio frequency signals, there is surprisingly little independent UK funding of

research into possible health effects...

This is a field where there is a lot of control. ICNIRP, a private group who set the international radio frequency exposure guidelines, control the international WHO EMF (Electromagnetic fields) project(199). ICNIRP members were part of AGNIR, including the AGNIR Chair(185), and are part of PHE and the DH(185). An ICNIRP member is now responsible for keeping COMARE200 up-to-date in this field (COMARE are now responsible for assessing the safety of radio frequency signals in the UK).

PHE/DH and the wireless industry appear to control almost all of the research selection and funding in this field in the UK (196,197). Even when funding is from the EU, as is the case for the MOBI-Kids201 study (risk of brain cancer from exposure to radio frequency fields in childhood and adolescence) and the GERoNiMO202 study (risks of cancer, neurodegenerative diseases, behaviour, reproductive outcomes and ageing), the UK involvement is PHE.

Ideally, scientists would be free to investigate possible harmful effects without being selected/overseen by industry and the Government, and would be free to publish all results even when they found harmful effects. Some scientists working in this field have lost their funding when they published adverse effects(203).

Losing your funding because you publish inconvenient results is not science, it is excessive control and manipulation. We need high quality independent science and for scientists to be protected when they publish inconvenient results.

We need an independent (of industry, Government, ICNIRP and AGNIR) and honest expert body to regularly assess the evidence. For inconvenient evidence, as in this case, it is especially important to have experts with integrity and no conflicts of interest. Up to now the body collecting the evidence has been AGNIR. But AGNIR has provided inaccurate and incorrect information and was closed in May(186).

The role has now fallen to COMARE (the Committee on Medical Aspects of Radiation in the Environment), under the guidance of a former AGNIR member (COMARE Secretariat). However, many COMARE members specialise in ionising radiation; the Secretariat has provided inaccurate information in the past and is part of ICNIRP (a Conflict of Interest). I would recommend that a new group is formed.

The [World Health Organisation's] International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) bring together scientists who have published studies relevant to the field being discussed, to assess the evidence. Bringing together a wide range of scientists who have published papers on the effects of radio frequency radiation might help to keep assessments evidence based and accurate, provided that scientists who have reported adverse effects are well represented in the group and are not excluded. It might help to include an expert in child safeguarding and an expert in research integrity, to ensure that safeguarding children is considered and that conclusions and recommendations reflect the evidence.

Current advice from the Chief Medical Officers about mobile phone use for under 16s has been ignored. It would be helpful if advisers making recommendations stand up for their own advice and publicise it widely. Advice on public health is there to keep people safe and well and not to protect the Government by having warnings in small print somewhere, but with no one knowing about it.

It is vital to have mechanisms in place whereby inaccurate and incorrect Government information and advice can be challenged, corrected or retracted. Mechanisms exist for correcting scientific research published in journals and the same scientific rigour and challenge ought to exist for Government information.

There currently appears to be no effective mechanism for challenging and correcting inaccurate or incorrect information provided by Government. Challenge and discussion are part of the scientific process.

Unless this is put in place, there remains the risk that Government reports and advice may not be evidence based, but may contain the information the Government or lobbyists wish to hear. Decisions, policies and regulations would then be based on inaccurate information.

There needs to be a body responsible for communicating to the public, medical practitioners and decision makers the evidence for adverse effects of wireless technologies and recommending protective measures.

At the moment this is PHE. But PHE have failed to provide accurate information or to protect children or the public (point 3). I would recommend that people who provide factually incorrect information (which could damage public health) within PHE/DH are removed from their role.

Conflicts of Interest need to be addressed, including where members of ICNIRP are assessing the safety of exposures below the ICNIRP guidelines. It is possible that a new independent expert scientific body (above) could recommend protective measures, as long as the group is not being controlled by the wireless industry.

Introducing a process to hold PHE to account for their advice and recommendations might help to keep information evidence based. This may also be used to check whether recommendations are being followed.

However, any group or panel can be corrupted if there are conflicts of interest and people do not act with honesty or integrity. For this issue in particular we need a culture of honesty and caring about public health. Challenge and scrutiny are vital.

Harming children is wrong, even when it is economically advantageous or taking action is difficult."

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