



Commentary: Mobile Telephones - Will the Golden Goose Become the Mad Cow?

Leif Södergren^a and Olle Johansson^b

A British government expert panel recently recommended that children should refrain from using mobile telephones. In December 2000, leaflets were sent out to all the British households warning mobile phone buyers about the uncertainty over mobile phone's potential health risks. This might prove a very sound measure. But, why is it that the Swedish or the Finnish governments, usually progressive and eager to prohibit harmful substances, have said nothing about the possible dangers of microwaves and mobile phones? Why is it so quiet on the Northern front? The answer is simple. Stockholm is becoming the wireless capital of the world and national as well as international companies are establishing a foothold there. The new generation mobile phones are here and three times as many antennas, as there are today, are about to be built. It is therefore politically impossible to say anything that remotely threatens the mobile phone industry, the golden goose that brings so much prosperity to industry and government. But, mobile phones might one day become a BSE (mad cow) crisis.

The Swedish Council for Work Life Research is a central government agency for the long-term planning and funding of research and development. In 1997 it was asked by the government to make an inventory of EMF-related health risks. The final report was presented on November 30, 2000. Two (Lena Hillert and Ulf Bergqvist) of the three individuals who prepared this report have industry connections. They are "scientific consultants" to the Swedish telecom mobile phone operator, Telia, and therefore, of course, not unbiased.

The report presented on the website www.ralf.se gives mobile phones a clean bill of health risks. The report also incorrectly claims that the general public is not particularly worried about health risks from mobile phones. Some smaller groups, however, the report states, are concerned about EMF health risks. The following wording is interesting "...this concern can itself be a health problem and should be dealt with". This sounds very ominous indeed and is reminiscent of the Soviet-style thought-management. Do they mean that everyone concerned about EMF health problems, including the authors of the British government report recommending caution with the use of mobile phones, are themselves a health problem and should be "dealt with"? That kind of wording one might find in industry lobby group memos, not in a report from a government agency. Compared to the British report, this is a farce.

The Swedish government has been urged that the report should be remade by individuals that are not so heavily biased. The government has yet to react. If they do not use unbiased advice, maybe mobile phones will one day become their mad cow crisis!

Humans regard themselves as very sophisticated individuals, but biologically we are as primitive as the stone age man. We have no built-in protection against environmental toxins or microwaves. One day, when the party is over and we soberly look back at this period, we might wonder how entire populations allowed themselves to be continually exposed to low levels of microwaves. We might regret not having worried more about the "microwave sickness" that Soviet scientists identified decades before. We might regret not having heeded warnings from the likes of dr. John Holt in Australia when he pointed out that mobile phone frequencies double the amount of histamines and, thus, perhaps cause asthma and allergies. We might also regret having left research in the hands of the mobile phone industry. How likely were they to sponsor research that would threaten their existence?

Industry is powerful enough to influence the Finnish and Swedish governments and also the EU to tune down the possible dangers from mobile phones and base stations. This means that we will simply have to sit back and wait for a very concrete and widespread illness caused by microwaves from mobile phones. Maybe somewhat cynical, but it is logical; most people are probably not willing to stop using their mobile phones without substantial physical proof regardless of government warnings. So, the question is: is there any evidence of any illness so far? Can we identify any specific symptoms?

In a personal letter (September 2, 1996), dr. John Holt wrote "The mast cells, which underlie all surfaces of the body, produce histamine in response to the allergen. In the presence of cellular phone frequencies at low intensity the output of histamine is doubled. Furthermore, under the continued influence of 800 to 900 MHz, the conventional anti-histamines and steroids do not work. They are unable to turn off the histamine production switched on in the mast cells by the e-smog." Holt's theory that asthma is caused by microwaves is interesting. It is not in the heavily polluted, less developed countries that asthma is more frequent, but in the highly developed countries of the West with much 'electro-smog', and where almost every other child has some kind of allergy today. Exactly the same ideas and warnings have also been put forward by one of the authors below (O.J.; Aftonbladet, November 20, 1998).

In Scandinavia we suffer from an epidemic of "burn-out" individuals from all walks of life. People become dysfunctional due to stress and have to leave work, in the best of cases for a few month, in some cases never to return. A new vocabulary has been invented, and the newspapers direct their focus on the subject.

Even children are affected. "Teenagers are stressed to pieces", says the Danish psychiatrist Gideon Ziotnek (Expressen, November 22, 1999). Ziotnek thinks that stress will cause the brain to atrophy. "Young people can get emotional and intellectual disturbances". Another paper (Göteborgs-Posten, November 21, 1999) wrote the previous day: "A study among a thousand schoolchildren in Gothenburg shows that 13% with normal hearing experience tinnitus. This can be a sign of social stress". A question worth asking: Why is everyone suddenly so stressed? Have we changed our social behaviour so much? We are working harder, but are we working that much harder? In the past, people also worked hard, but what is now new in our lives? What has dramatically changed to cause this stress? There is one important factor: the increased radiation from mobile phones, television, radio broadcasts, and so forth.

During 1994-1996, when Swedish teenagers started using mobile phones, prescriptions for sleeping pills to young women of the ages between 15-24 years doubled (Dagens Eko (radio programme), October 4, 1999). During the same time, prescriptions of anti-depressants to the same group increased by 40%.

But, how exactly can we attribute the stress we experience to microwaves? Professor Henry Lai from USA during a visit to Gothenburg (September 15, 1999) explained that microwaves have the same stress effect on the human body as loud sound has. The invisible microwaves, that we cannot see but that pass through our bodies, is a chronic stressor. Our bodies, whether we want to or not, experience the microwaves as stress, as though we were exposed to loud noise continuously. This might explain the epidemic of "burn-out" individuals. With an ongoing background stress from microwaves and other 'electrosmog', perhaps our capability to function properly has been impaired. We, thus, become stress-sensitive and brittle.

A further worrying comment from Professor Lai was that this

stress, like any other stress, has an accumulative effect.

Are people finally beginning to make associations between their environment and their symptoms? Yes, some are. When young people show an increase in oral cancer, there is certainly cause to pause. A professor in tumour surgery, Staffan Edström at the Sahlgrenska Hospital in Gothenburg, explains (Göteborgs-Posten, December 13, 1999) that we all live in an environment with intensified radiation from mobile phones, computers, and cars, and that this gives cause to think that such environmental factors can explain this increase in oral cancer among the young.

Will our national health system be able to cope with any new illnesses caused by mobile phones? Brain tumours are comparatively easy to deal with if they occur. Either people die or they survive after surgery, but if a large part of the working population is becoming prematurely senile (*inter alia*, microwaves have been shown, by

Persson, Salford and Brun in 1997 (Wireless Networks 3, 455-461), to cause toxins to pass the blood-brain-barrier into the brain where they may initiate Alzheimer's disease), then we could face a practical and ethical situation of immense proportions. What should one come up with in dealing with a large senile population with no place to go and no one to care for them?

Mobile phones might mean a tidy profit today. But, tomorrow we might have to pay. The golden goose might very well turn out to be the mad cow.

Authors:

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2002

February 20 - 21 Wednesday - Thursday

Nursing Practice and Complementary Therapies

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: Ausmed, PO Box 4086, Parkville Vic 3052, Australia

phone: 03 9375 7311 fax: 03 9375 7299

e-mail: ausmed@ausmed.com.au web: www.ausmed.com.au

March 20 - 23 Wednesday - Saturday

ACNEM Specialist Training Programs (STPs): Sports Nutrition & Sports Injuries II Nutritional Medicine in Pain & Inflammation

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: ACNEM, 13 Hilton Street, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193

phone: 03 9589 6088 fax: 03 9589 5158

e-mail: acnem@mail.austasia.net web: www.acnem.org

phone: 03 9589 6088 fax: 03 9589 5158

e-mail: acnem@mail.austasia.net web: www.acnem.org

March 20 - 24 Wednesday - Sunday

39th Primary Course in Nutritional & Environmental Medicine

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: ACNEM, 13 Hilton Street, Beaumaris, Vic. 3193

phone: 03 9589 6088 fax: 03 9589 5158

e-mail: acnem@mail.austasia.net web: www.acnem.org

April 5 - 7 Friday - Sunday [postponed from September 2001]

The 2nd International Mind of a Child Conference

venue: Sydney, Australia

contact: Carole Drew, 1789 Pittwater Rd, Mona Vale, NSW 2103

phone: 02 9979 9444 fax: 03 9979 9016

web: www.mindofachildaustralia.org

May 10 - 12 Friday - Sunday

ACoHM Herbal Medicine Course: Module I

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: ACoHM, 38/487 Toorak Road, Toorak, Vic 3142

phone: 03 9804 8968 fax: 03 9804 7200

e-mail: acohm@bigpond.com

July 14 - 18 Sunday - Thursday

3rd World Congress for Psychotherapy: "Anima Mundi - the Challenge of Globalisation"

venue: Vienna, Austria

contact: WCP, Rosenbursenstrasse 8/3/8, A-1010 Vienna, Austria

phone: +43 1 512 04 44 fax: +43 1 512 05 70

e-mail: wcp.office@psychotherpie.at web: www.worldpsyche.org

July 26 - 28 Friday - Sunday

ACoHM Herbal Medicine Course: Module II

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: ACoHM, 38/487 Toorak Road, Toorak, Vic 3142

phone: 03 9804 8968 fax: 03 9804 7200

e-mail: acohm@bigpond.com

October 17 Thursday

ACoHM Workshops

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: ACoHM, 38/487 Toorak Road, Toorak, Vic 3142

phone: 03 9804 8968 fax: 03 9804 7200

e-mail: acohm@bigpond.com

October 18 - 20 Friday - Sunday

ACoHM Herbal Medicine Course: Module III

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: ACoHM, 38/487 Toorak Road, Toorak, Vic 3142

phone: 03 9804 8968 fax: 03 9804 7200

e-mail: acohm@bigpond.com

October 19 - 20 Saturday - Sunday

ACoHM Fellowship Primary Examinations: Saturday = revision;

Sunday = examinations

venue: Melbourne, Australia

contact: ACoHM, 38/487 Toorak Road, Toorak, Vic 3142

phone: 03 9804 8968 fax: 03 9804 7200

e-mail: acohm@bigpond.com



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25. Burney PGJ, Luczynska C, Chinn S, Jarvis D. "The European Community Respiratory Health Survey." *Eur Resp J* 1994; 7: 954-60.

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