

*DA Savitz. Occupational and Environmental Medicine. October (2001) Vol.58 # 10 p 617.*

Editorial comment on the research into associations between brain cancer and occupational exposure to EMFs.

British workers show no indications whatsoever of an association between measures of exposure to magnetic fields and mortality from brain cancer.

Reanalysis of three of the largest studies to date has shown that subject inclusion criteria, exposure categorization and handling of confounding factors (or the lack thereof) could explain why some studies show no association and others show sporadic positive findings.

A relative risk of 1.1 per 10 micro Tesla Years would be compatible with the results of both positive and negative studies reported to date.

The degree of effort to prove the real risk was in fact as high as 1.15 would be out of proportion to the regulatory value of the result. Such a study would have to overpower the cumulative findings obtained so far.

The commentator seriously doubts the need for any more expenditure and effort on epidemiology in this area until some new biologically credible mechanism has been proposed. Even then, the new studies would need to quantitatively account for why previous studies had not established a significant risk.

Comment

We would tend to agree that further epidemiological research of the sort used to date is unlikely to change the general conclusions.

Biological effects of exposure have been observed, but their relation, if any, to harm remains speculative.

