

No link between cellphone use, brain cancer, major report finds

September 4 2024, by Robin Foster



In news that should reassure folks glued to their cellphones all day, a new international review finds no link between cellphone use and brain cancer.

Commissioned by the World Health Organization (WHO), the review included 11 experts from 10 countries who sifted through decades of research—5,000 studies published between 1994 and 2022 to be exact. The final analysis was published in the journal [Environmental International](#).

What exactly were they looking for? They were trying to determine whether greater exposure to radio frequencies commonly used by wireless electronics, including cellphones, might up the chances of a [brain cancer](#) diagnosis.

What did they find? In the 63 studies they honed in on, the risk of brain cancer did not increase, even with prolonged cellphone use (defined as 10 years or more), among those who spent a lot of time on their cellphones, or for people who made a lot of calls. They also saw no increased risks of leukemia or brain cancer in children exposed to radio or TV transmitters or cellphone towers.

"These results are very reassuring," lead study author Ken Karipidis told reporters, according to the Washington Post. While [cellphone use](#) has "skyrocketed, there has been no rise in the incidence of brain cancers," he noted.

Concerns about a potential link first emerged in 2011 when the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the WHO's cancer agency, classified radio wave exposure as a possible carcinogen to humans, the Post reported, but that was based on limited evidence from [observational studies](#).

Karipidis explained that since then, a "lot more studies have come out" on [radio waves](#) and they've been "quite extensive," prompting the WHO to commission the latest review.

Karipidis said the problem with some of the early research was that it relied on case-control studies that compared the responses of people with brain cancer against those without the disease—which can be "somewhat biased."

Not only that, but newer generation cellphone networks, including 3G and 4G networks, actually produce "substantially lower" radio frequency emissions than older networks, review co-author Mark Elwood, an honorary professor of cancer epidemiology at the University of Auckland in New Zealand, told the Post.

"There are no major studies yet of 5G networks, but there are studies of radar, which has similar high frequencies; these do not show an increased risk," he added.

Karipidis noted that having more cellphone towers actually reduces the amount of radiation emitted from cellphones, because they don't have to work as hard to get a signal.

One expert noted that new technologies that spread quickly often raise fears of health problems.

"Worries about the health effects of new technology are common and tend to increase when a new technology is adopted widely or adopted quickly," Keith Petrie, a University of Auckland expert who was not involved in the review, told the Post.

"This was seen during the COVID-19 pandemic when people attacked cell towers believing a baseless theory that 5G towers spread the coronavirus."

More information: The National Cancer Institute has more on [cellphones and cancer risk](#).

Ken Karipidis et al, The effect of exposure to radiofrequency fields on cancer risk in the general and working population: A systematic review of human observational studies – Part I: Most researched outcomes, *Environment International* (2024). DOI: [10.1016/j.envint.2024.108983](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envint.2024.108983)

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Citation: No link between cellphone use, brain cancer, major report finds (2024, September 4) retrieved 5 September 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2024-09-link-cellphone-brain-cancer-major.html>

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