

Growing research links brain tumours

By Nynsa Skilton
Medical and Technology Reporter

A growing body of research is revealing a link between mobile phone use and brain tumours, prompting calls to comprehensively warn users of potential risks.

Canberra neurosurgeon Vinil Kharana has published a paper examining peer-reviewed, long-term population studies conducted to date on mobile phone use and brain tumours on the side of the head.

The review finds heavy mobile phone use over at least 10 years can double the risk of getting a brain tumour on one side of the head.

But the executive director of the Australian Centre for Radiofrequency Bioeffects Research, Professor Rodney Croft, said there was no proof mobile phones could cause cancer.

Professor Croft said the population studies had a number of limitations, such as relying on subjects reporting their mobile phone use.

"I do think the issues to do with the methodology are too great to warrant that [a warning] at the moment," he said.

He said he was "certainly happy" to listen to his handset against his ear.

An international study, which took place across 13 countries and

involved thousands of participants, has examined the potential effects of mobile phones on human health.

The \$15-million Interphone Study finished in 2006, but the complete results have not yet been published.

The researcher leading the Australian part of the study, Professor Bruce Armstrong, said there had been concern expressed over the delay in a report from Interphone.

"But I'm optimistic that there should be a report from it in the next three to six months," he said.

Professor Armstrong declined to comment about a potential relationship between mobile phones and cancer, before the report came out.

Dr Kharana's review, of which high-profile neurosurgeon Charles Teo is one of the co-authors, is published in the international journal *Surgical Neurology*.

The authors conclude there is adequate epidemiological evidence to suggest a link between mobile phone use over at least 10 years and the development of a brain tumour on the same side of the head as that preferred for mobile phone use.

The European Parliament approved a resolution on health concerns associated with electromagnetic fields this week and Dr Kharana said the Australian Government should take heed.

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to heavy mobile phone use

He said there was a risk the issue of mobile phones could play out in the same way as cigarettes did.

"The first studies that came out for smoking were approximately 50 years before it was decided that smoking was dangerous and should be regarded as a medical hazard by governments," he said.

Dr Kharana said the Australian Government should support a national study, which was not funded by industry, and involve long-term mobile phone users to assess health effects including brain tumour incidence.

He said people should be encouraged to use handsets or talk

on speaker phone and landlines. Phone packaging should also warn users of concerns over long-term use of mobile phones.

Cancer Council Australia chief executive officer Professor Ian Oliver said the new study showed there was at least preliminary evidence that there was a problem with mobile phone use after 10 years.

"I think while we're waiting to see if that evidence strengthens, we could take prudent precautions. I don't think you always have to wait, particularly if it's a serious matter like developing brain tumours, until every last bit of data is in," Professor Oliver said.



WARNING: Canberra's Vinil Kharana.